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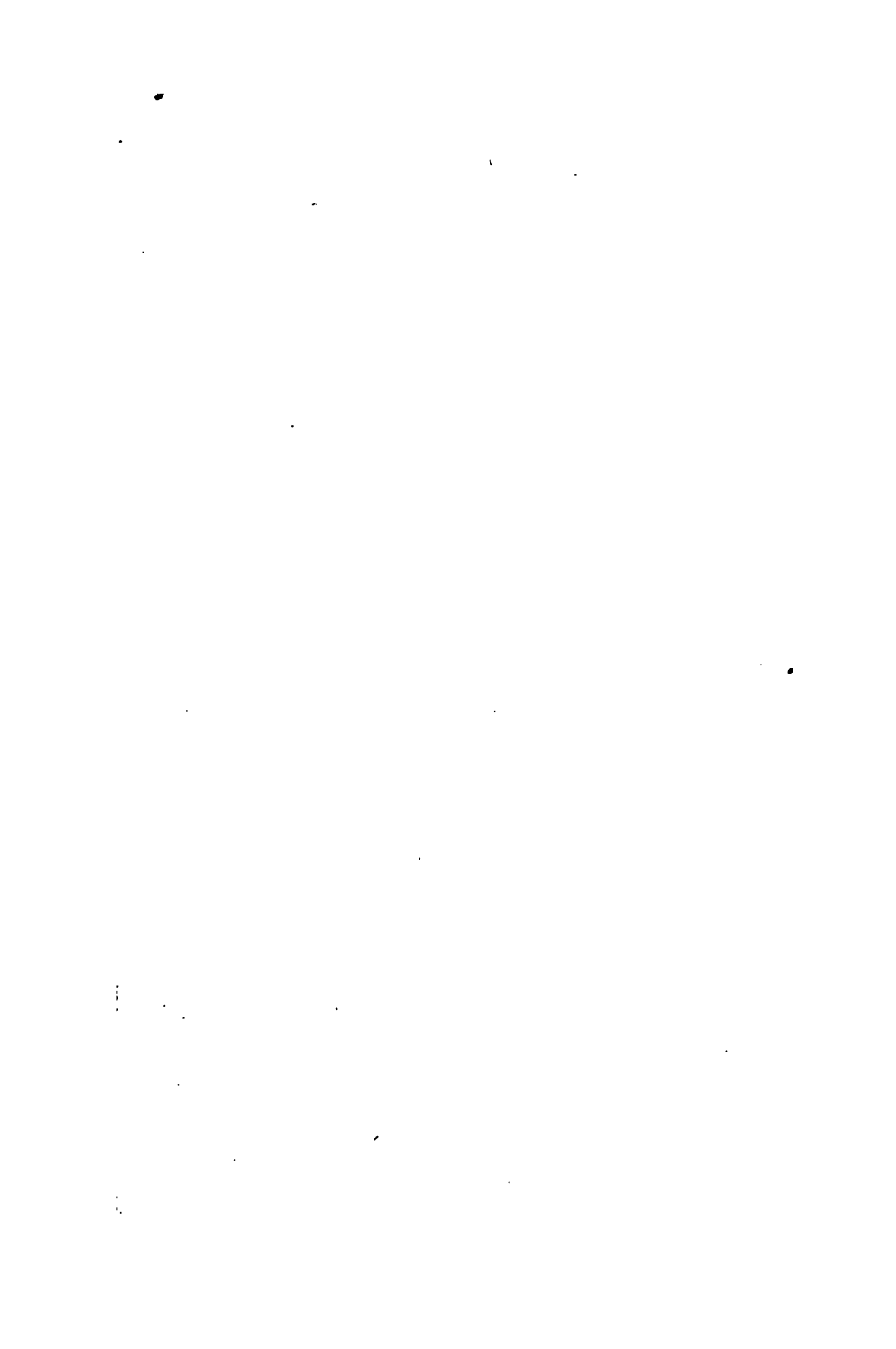
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PIN MONEY;

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF

"THE MANNERS OF THE DAY."

"Here's something to buy pins;—marriage is chargeable."

VENICE PRESERVED.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

**HENRY COLBURN AND RICHARD BENTLEY,
NEW BURLINGTON STREET.**

1831.

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C. WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND:

PIN MONEY.

CHAPTER I.

ORL.—O, but she is wise!

ROS.—Or else she could not have the wit to do this;—the wiser the waywarder!

AS YOU LIKE IT.

DURING the sojourn of the unfortunate Sir Brooke Rawleigh in the borough of Martwich, he had scarcely suffered more from the impracticable and litigious character of its burghesses (a body incorporating among other living lumber, four attorneys, and a thing that called itself an assessor), than from his misgivings touching the proceedings of his establishment in the metropolis. While he found

himself destined to endure in the service of his country and its parliament, all the vexations which parchment, pounce, and pragmaticality can produce, the letters of Frederica appeared to him almost as ominous of coming evil, as the deeds of the solicitors of the trustees of the minor of the estate, including in its net produce the borough whose representation he was ambitious of appropriating.

The post of Tuesday had asserted Lady Rawleigh's intention to excuse herself from attending Lord Calder's supper party; while that of Wednesday produced a volume in praise of the society by which she had found it graced;—and Wednesday's declarations, that Frederica had no intention of again seeking the tumultuous pleasures of the great world during the absence of her husband, were neutralized by Thursday's description of the supreme excellence of the ball of the preceding night. To the first of these contradictions, Sir Brooke was rendered in some degree insensible by the posthumous torments of a horrible bowl of corporation-punch; even had he

swallowed the four attorneys and the assessor in a single dose, his dyspepsia could not have been more excruciating. But when,—edged into the suspicious brevity of a postscript extorted by Launceston's threats,—he perused the slight notice "Lord Calder has just found his way *by accident* into my prohibited drawing-room; he was as usual rather caustic but very amusing,"—his heart began to fail him; and he was even moved to inquire with more pertinacity than was at all agreeable to the five esquires of the law, or to the host of the Black Bull, "How long this tedious corporation business would detain him at Martwich?"

Luckily, his friend Lexley was far more conversant than himself in the potations pottle-deep, and the botherations burgess-deep, attendant on all traffic and barter in corporation wares. While the four attorneys took fees, and the assessor snuff, he bade the refractory Raleigh take patience; and was himself content with taking great credit for his temperate mediation between them all. But alas! *his* was

the only credit accorded; and while the legal advisers of the trustees of the minor of the estate of Martwich, examined with scrutinizing investigation the number and numbers of the notes they were about to place to the innocent infant's account, per favour of Mr. Ruggs and the timber of the Oxley estate, mine host of the sable Bull would have resented with indignation the slightest scrutiny exercised by Sir Brooke into the contents of the three yards and three-quarters of rancid paper, containing an arithmetical ratio and register of the appetites of the four-and-twenty burgesses of the ancient town of Martwich. The amount,—whether in pounds of beef or of Bank of England notes,—was far more vexatious than frivolous to the departing guest!

This slender inventory of edible filth might probably have been prolonged by the three-and-sixpenny "lights" and two-and-sixpenny "fires" of an additional four-and-twenty hours, had not Frederica's epistolary assurance that she had given up all intention of going to the races,—an assurance written in the Thursday despondency of the Waddleton exposure,—

satisfied him that she would as assuredly make her appearance there as the clerk of the courts. Having somewhat unworthily curtailed the glibse propinities of the alderman of Martwich and his sub-delegates, and very eagerly received the receipt of the author of all the punch composed in his honour, he threw himself back in the corner of Mr. Lexley's carriage; satisfied that, with the exception of pin-money, no coin of the realm can be more unsatisfactorily bestowed than that wasted in the cause of borough ventriloquism. Instead of the inward satisfaction, and outward dignity, which he had anticipated his whole life long as co-existent with the senatorial estate, he found his ill-humour increasing from mile to mile; nor would any turnpike-man along that road of many trusts,—of trusts which trust not and intolerable tolls,—have believed that the rueful visage gracing one side of "Squire Lexley's old chay," was that of the member newly elected and duly returned for the borough recently vacated by the late much-respected Peter Grampus, Esq., who had

expired of good health, and a fashionable quack.

It would have been well for poor Martin if the dignity of the buttery-hatch had permitted him to follow his lady to the races in a subordinate capacity; or if the perquisites of the steward's room had enabled him to make the excursion on his own behoof. Sir Brooke, although he had beguiled the wretched Lexley from the profound inhumation of an inn feather-bed, so prematurely that the slipshod waiters and the candles of the preceding night were yet unextinguished, in order to reach London at the earliest possible hour;—Sir Brooke,—although guiltless of any food more substantial than a biscuit, since the “tough and scorched mutton” of the preceding day, could not be persuaded to sit down to his tea and French rolls in Bruton-street, till he had cross-examined the legislator of his lower-house, with a degree of severity and acuteness worthy of Counsellor Phillips,—or Mr. Wakley, the anti-Cha-bertist.

But alas! the new M.P. gathered nothing

from the responses of the amazed Martin, nor even from the unasked loquacity of the parti-coloured vassal who brought in the "bubbling and loud-hissing urn," which could either sharpen his appetite or offuscate his suspicions. "My lady had been here,—my lady had been there;"—or rather, "my Lord Calder had been *here*, and my lady had been *there*."

"Has Lady Rawleigh been riding, Thomas? Did you hear the groom mention whether the new horse carried her ladyship well?"—

"Oh! no, Sir Brooke,—my lady has been so taken up at the picture man's, what is painting her ladyship's portrait,—"

"Portrait?"

"My lady goes reg'lar every day to Regent-street,—the French gentleman's, Sir."

"Very well, Thomas;—that will do,—I will ring when I want you."

Even could Sir Brooke Rawleigh have observed the grimace bestowed on him by his footman as he quitted the room, it would not have increased the measure of his indignation. But when, on the exit of the prying Thomas, he

started up from the breakfast table to pace the room in breathless irritation, and was arrested at the second turn by that attentive domestic's return to inform his master that "the house-keeper desired him to mention there was cold fowl in the house," Sir Brooke could willingly have annihilated him on the spot. "I beg your pardon, Sir Brooke," said he, in a most provokingly low and confidential voice, "but I have just recollected that my lady sent orders by Mrs. Pasley, as no one was to mention in the servants' hall on no account about the picture. I ask your pardon, Sir Brooke, but I should be sorry to get my lady's anger for not recollecting her orders."—

"Go, sirrah!" cried the agonized baronet, "go, and —"—the rest of the sentence was drowned in the violent slamming of the dining-room door.

And now, was not the fatal truth apparent?—was he not the most wretched of mankind? A mysterious picture,—a secret visit,—a degrading confidence reposed in her very menial,—a confidence only broken because the treacherous

Thomas had probably been unsecured by a sufficient bribe!—Frederica, *his* Frederica,—his own pure, gentle, spotless Frederica, had deceived him, wronged him, forsaken him!—He pushed away the plate of rolls, and leaning his elbows on the vacated space, covered his face with his hands!

The first impulse of the injured husband was despair,—the second a desire for vengeance; nor did the urn which sent up its steamy column on the table before him, boil with a fiercer heat than his own bosom. Snatching up his hat, he rushed from the house; and Thomas, who mounted the area steps to watch the direction taken by his distracted master, began to fear that he had been rash in his loquacity, and that Sir Brooke was gone to throw himself into the Serpentine! But even while he was confidentially communicating this intelligence to the under housemaid, the object of his apprehensions was quietly knocking at Lady Launceston's door. *Quietly* is perhaps an erroneous term; for the old lady's veteran butler afterwards noticed to her septuagenarian house-

keeper, that he had given a tat tat more than usual to the knocker.

There exist in the world,—in the conventional world so called,—certain spots endowed with a local sanctity of a peculiar kind. Nothing but a very romantic turn of mind enabled a celebrated French novelist to imagine a palace in which every syllable uttered was of the truest truth. But although “Le Palais de la Verité” was a mere fiction, a “Mansion of Whispers” is by no means a rarity among the aristocratic dwellings of the land. There are many patrician houses, in which custom has for so many years moderated the movements and lowered the voices of its inhabitants, that any unusual elevation of tone, or acceleration of action, passes therein for an insult. Sir Brooke Rawleigh had not been for so many months the son-in-law of Lady Launceston, without becoming aware that it was as much her custom to send for Dr. Camomile after being disordered by a sudden noise, as it would be his own to summon attendance after a paralytic stroke; and so powerful was the influence of her sotto-voce habits.

upon the feelings of the many to whom she was endeared by her kindly and amiable nature, that so far from borrowing Gargantua's mouth, or the petulance of a provincial Harry VIII., to exclaim "Within there, ho!" to the tardy domestic who turned the door upon its voiceless hinges—as if it were the wicket of the *Enfants Trouvés* charity opening to receive some new-born babe,—he actually subdued his indignation to demand, in the concert-pitch of Charles-street attunement, whether Lady Launceston was at home, and would receive him.

Instead, however, of listening for the reply, which in that pacific vestibule was usually uttered, in a pianissimo resembling the intonation of the invisible girl, he stalked past the trembling domestic; and albeit, like Tarquin, he "did gently press the rushes" in ascending the stairs, his steps were by no means so measured as might have been wished. It was evident from the deep blush with which Miss Elbany rose from Lady Rawleigh's harp as he threw open the drawing-room door, that she antici-

pated the approach of the son of her patroness rather than that of the new member for Martwich. The utmost vanity of Sir Brooke could not appropriate to himself a similar suffusion; he felt that he had forfeited all claim on such a blush, at the altar of St. George's Church, in the preceding August.

"Where is Lady Launceston?" cried he, in an agitated voice. "Can I see her?"

"Lady Olivia Tadcaster roused her out of her sleep this morning at eight o'clock, and talked her into a fever. She is taking some additional rest after such a shock and such an exertion; so that I should be sorry to wake her. But you seem agitated—I trust no family mischance?—Lady Rawleigh—Lord Launceston—tell me, I beseech you, what has occurred?"

"Nothing—nothing!" cried Sir Brooke, still holding the door in his hand, and retaining his hat on his head in a state of evident bewilderment, such as seemed to announce to poor Lucy that the object of her artful designs was either killed in a duel, or arrested by his tailor.

"Do not deceive me," said she, advancing towards the perturbed Rawleigh with blanched cheeks and quivering lips.

"I have not heard a word of Launceston since I left town," said he; preserving amid all his afflictions the presence of mind to interpret her feminine emotion.

"Then Marston or Rawleighford must be burned down!" thought Lucy, as she gazed upon his haggard looks; "or the Bank has stopped payment—or"—but she curtailed her conjectures when she perceived that their mysterious object was about to quit the room.

"Can I be of the least assistance to you?" she now inquired, approaching him yet nearer, and speaking in that ingratiating tone which the heart of man is so little prepared to resist;—nay, even Sir Brooke, although just then possessed with a spirit which might have done honour to the shaggy breast of an Hyrcanian bear, was mollified by its soothing influence. He removed the objectionable hat, and became humanized in a moment.

"Thank you—no!—I need not trouble you.

It is needless to disturb and vex other people with one's own affairs."

"I shall be most happy to be vexed with yours, if it will relieve your uneasiness," she continued, pushing a chair towards him while she assumed her seat on the sofa. She had detected with the ready tact of her sex that he was disordered in his humour, instead of his intellects; that he was only very cross; and suspecting, perhaps, something of the sources of his vexation, felt particularly inclined to be compassionate and conciliatory. Whether *malice*, in the French or English sense of the word—whether curiosity as to the cause or the effect were the motive of her conduct, she certainly exerted herself to obtain a full confession of the grievances of poor Sir Brooke.

"Miss Elbany!" said he, dashing down his gloves on the table, and unconsciously accepting the proffered chair. "I am the most miserable man on earth!" And the loss of his night's rest, and his morning's breakfast, certainly qualified his lengthened visage in corroboration of the statement. "But a week ago—such is

the infatuation of human blindness—"I thought myself blest with all the choicest gifts of heaven; and even a few hours since, had any one with friendly interposition forewarned me of the truth, and revealed to me the actual state of my"—

"My dear Sir Brooke!" interrupted Miss Elbany, really or affectedly terrified by his agitation, "you alarm me beyond measure. What *has* occurred to Lady Rawleigh?"

"She is gone to Hampton races."

"Is that all?—She has a very fine day for the expedition."

"She is gone with Mrs. William Erskyne."

"One of her oldest friends."

"She is gone with Mr. Vaux."

"The oldest friend of all the world."

"With—Lord Calder."

"The most agreeable companion,—the best bred man in London."

Sir Brooke Rawleigh began to think *the* companion the very reverse of either, when she continued—

"I am delighted to find that her ladyship

is at length in the way of passing a pleasant morning; for since you left town she has been sadly out of spirits. Lady Rawleigh dined here yesterday; and when she quitted us, Lady Launceston observed that she should certainly write to remonstrate with you if you prolonged your stay at Martwich; for that poor Frederica was losing all her good looks with fretting."

Rawleigh, who had not yet succeeded in obliterating from his mental vision that smile of healthful loveliness which had shone across Mrs. Erskyne's britschka from the countenance of his wife full upon that of Lord Calder, muttered something in the depths of his soul touching the inventive mendacity of the female sex; but recollecting that no bond of mutual amity demanded the obligation of a lie on the part of Miss Elbany in behalf of her patroness's daughter, he contented himself with observing aloud, "With *fretting*? — you mean with the suggestions of an evil conscience!"

"Come—come!" cried Miss Elbany, good-

humouredly; "I am beginning to find out what is the matter with you; and it only remains for me to discover by what Iago,—by what insinuating knave,—what cogging, cozening slave, these unpleasant suspicions have been instilled into your mind. Is it Mr. Lexley,—by word of mouth?—or Lord Launceston by word of letter?"

"Facts, Miss Elbany, speak for themselves."

"I trust they speak more explicitly than you do; for with all your eloquence you have brought forward no real subject of complaint."

"How!—do you call it nothing that ever since I left town Frederica has thought proper to throw herself into the society of a person most distasteful to *me*,—most dangerous to her own reputation?"

"You mean Lord Calder; you are not yet in the House; and may therefore *name* 'the noble lord' with impunity. And if she has,—where is the fault of such a proceeding;—how can she possibly avoid the presence of a man frequenting her own circle, and courted in every other?"

“This offers no apology for her making her appearance at Calder House.”

“Excuse me, Sir Brooke! There are certain ceremonies of society which admit of no evasion; and which forbade her to excuse herself under circumstances which must have created universal suspicions of your jealousy,—your undeserving want of confidence in your wife.”

“Want of confidence?—it is my blind reliance on her prudence which has proved the origin of all this evil. I ought not to have left her alone in London.”

“At the distance of a few hundred yards from the protection of her nearest relatives, with whom she has associated daily and almost hourly, since your departure!—But of what further evil do you complain?”

“Of follies which require a better explanation than even your partiality can invent in her favour. I have accidentally learned from my servants,—yes! Miss Elbany, Lady Rawleigh’s indiscretions have even placed her in the power of her own menials,—that during my stay at Martwich, my wife has been paying mysterious

visits, to some unaccountable abode in Regent-street."

"Those who condescend to listen to the reports of servants, deserve to be mystified with the signs and wonders of their vulgar ignorance."

"It is said that she is sitting for her picture!—very likely!—destined no doubt to adorn the private gallery of Calder House."

"Or perhaps to become the companion of yonder miniature," said Miss Elbany, pointing to a portrait of Lord Launceston, suspended opposite to his mother's favourite sofa. "Oh! fie—fie!—Sir Brooke, I thought you superior to all this folly! But I must do something more than reprove, since I have your reform at heart; I must convince, and quickly,—for I fear we may be interrupted."

Chafing a little at the tone of authority assumed by his fair friend, Rawleigh prepared himself to listen with as much patience, as his sorrows and his hunger would admit.

"You are well aware," she began, "that I have no reason to be biassed in favour of Lady

Rawleigh;—that from the moment of her arrival in town, she has treated *me* with a degree of distrust and contempt; such as believe me I never experienced from any other person; such as my state of dependance on Lady Launceston has alone prevented me from resenting with becoming spirit. But I feel that the same poverty and helplessness of condition should have been my protection against her unkindness.”

Sir Brooke, as he gazed on the countenance of the beautiful Lucy, softened by sensibility and blushing with earnestness, thought he had never beheld so beautiful a creature. His indignation against the offending Frederica increased with this allusion to her injuries.

“But I cannot allow my private resentments against lady Rawleigh to influence my view of her conduct; which, from my own observation and knowledge, I venture to acquit *in every instance* of the charges you have brought against her. Relying on your goodnature to inquire no further on the subject than I am inclined to tell you, I give you my honour that

I happened to be in that mysterious dwelling, which you speak of as some horrid cavern belonging to Lord Calder, at the very moment of her visit; and that I myself overheard her enforce a promise of secrecy respecting the picture, because she wished it to surprise her mother, and obtain an impartial verdict from her husband, as that of a stranger."

"Very likely!—when ladies exact promises of secrecy, they are quite at liberty to assign their own motives for the action."

"But how could she hope to deceive *you*, who are naturally accountable for the price of 'the action' in coin of the realm?"

"Oh, no!—Frederica is independent of *my* authority on those grounds, as well as on all others. Frederica has her *pin money* to defray the cost of her follies,—whether vicious or frivolous."

"I will not hear another word on the subject, if you are inclined to discuss it in such unhandsome terms. You have no right to apply an epithet to—to your wife, which you would not suffer to be employed against her by

another person ;—an epithet of which no living woman can be less deserving.”

Sir Brooke appeared touched by this generous enthusiasm.

“ I venture to assert,” continued Miss Elbany, “ that no feeling ever rested in the heart, —no idea ever entered the mind of Lady Rawleigh, which might not be safely confided to you,—to me,—to the whole world. The life of routine and filial submission which preceded her marriage having deprived her of all experience in the habits and temptations of general society,—she is now learning her lesson; and if on occasion of every trivial error arising from ignorance of the world, she is to encounter the severe misinterpretation of those on whose leniency she has the best claim, we must not be surprised to find her at some future time indifferent and desperate as to their condemnation. You are jealous,—do not disavow it; and you have lent a willing ear to your own misrepresentations and those of others. But recollect the powerful declaration of Sterne, that ‘ whenever a helpless and innocent victim

is to be sacrificed, it is easy to pick up sticks enough in any thicket where it has strayed, to make a fire to offer it up with.' "

" I have a great mind," said Sir Brooke, after a momentary fancy that Miss Lucy Elbany would have made a better governess than companion,—a fancy which caused him to pause and leave this first proposition somewhat unluckily exposed to the ridicule of that lovely preceptress, who regarded his *mind*, as exhibited in the present instance, to be peculiarly *little*,—" I have a *very* great mind to appeal to Frederica's candour for an explanation of this business; and thus at once confirm or terminate my suspicions."

" There never was a woman bold enough to act as you suppose, who wanted cunning to vindicate her conduct," said Miss Elbany, calmly; " I should have no faith in Lady Rawleigh's innocence on her own asseveration; but satisfied as I am on that point, I advise you to wait for a voluntary explanation, which will prove far more satisfactory to your feel-

ings. If I have any skill in human nature, her confidence will not be long delayed; with *her* quick sensibility and honourable principles she is incapable of deception."

"I wish she had been incapable of going to the races this morning," sighed Sir Brooke.

"Had she known that her predilection for a beautiful drive on a summer's day, in company with several persons of her own rank and respectability in life, would expose her to her husband's ungenerous usage in a secret cross-examination of her servants during her absence, and his intention of alarming her mother, and irritating her brother, by an overcharged statement of facts, she would probably have relinquished her project."

"Then after all, how *would* you advise me to act?" said Sir Brooke, glad to find his suspicions and his anger in some measure appeased by the arguments and moderation of a person so impartial as Miss Elbany.—And as his agonies abated, he began to recur with tenderness to his absent wife and his neglected breakfast,—

so that hunger had perhaps some share in his persuadability.

"To act?—I see no occasion for *action*: Receive Lady Rawleigh as you usually do, and as she deserves, with affectionate warmth, and I am certain her explanations will supersede all necessity for accusation."

"I believe you are very right," said Rawleigh, taking up his hat, "and I am sure you are very kind. I have no right to trouble you with these tedious details."

"Are you not aware," said she, laughingly extending her hand towards him, "that women—especially spinsters like myself—have an instinctive taste for the audience of domestic squabbles, either for the sake of instruction or—mischief?"

"You, at least are a peacemaker!" said he; and the relief of his mind, and the inteneration caused by the prospect of his return to the French rolls and cold fowl, induced the sober baronet to imprint a ceremonious salute upon the fair hand which attempted not to resist so unusual an act of courtesy.

Alas ! at the very moment the lips of Sir Brooke were applied to those taper fingers, Lady Huntingfield and Lady Margaret Fieldham were ushered into the room !

CHAPTER II.

Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

ROMEO AND JULIET.

NOTWITHSTANDING the air of amazement, with which Lady Huntingfield gazed on the awkward and hasty retreat effected by her Rawleighford neighbour, and the sneer of incredulity with which she listened to the explanations of Lady Launceston's companion as to the error which caused her own admittance, and the impossibility of her ladyship's receiving visits that morning, she was very far from expressing the real state of her surprise and indignation at the nature of the scene she had witnessed.

The object of her appearance in Charles-street was to ascertain, if possible, from the

ingenuous indiscretion of Lady Launceston's discourse, the real nature of the connexion between her daughter and "the strange soapboiling woman" with whom she had thought proper to associate herself in public contempt. Lady Huntingfield was one of those scrupulous persons who renounce, without much examination, the society of any unlucky individual around whom the malice of the world has raised a cloud of suspicion. No one was more rigorously disposed to maintain the quarantine laws of fashionable life, and reject all contact with infected persons; but, unluckily the Lazaretto of her avoidance was open to the shame, rather than to the sin— to offenders convicted of *mauvais ton*, as well as of moral irregularities. "She is very ill spoken of," or "nobody seems to like him," or "she is quite in a second-rate set," were sentences of exclusion from her friendship far more peremptory than those arising from Lady Rochester's sins, or Lady Barbara Dynley's indiscretions; and although she was quite indifferent to what she had estimated as Lady Rawleigh's flirtation with Sir Robert Morse, at Wednesday's Al-

mack's, she was prepared to resent with becoming rigour Lady Rawleigh's public protection of a Mrs. Waddlestone at Thursday's drawing-room. On such occasions Lady Huntingfield had a favourite phrase, which affords a very general protestation of moral disinterestedness to matrons of ferocious severity in their social code. "It is not on my *own* account; but I must not forget that I have daughters!"

Lady Huntingfield had not only the mortification of being disappointed of the information she coveted, but of witnessing at once the immorality of Lady Lamceston's son-in-law, and the provoking self-possession of her companion. In the very face of the exposure Miss Elbany raised her large dark eyes to the narrow, prying visage of the intruder, and replied to her disdainful interrogations with an air of lofty superiority, which appeared to Lady Margaret Fieldham and her Mama almost worthy of the tread-mill; but as Lady Huntingfield herself observed when she recounted the affair to her friend Lady Lawford that evening, "what can

the young lady do to her? she is a very good creature

one expect but confidence in a creature belonging to such a situation in life!" Perhaps Miss Elbany's private opinion of the diffidence and feminine modesty of fine ladies, might have been found reciprocal.

Meanwhile as dinner-time approached, and Sir Brooke Rawleigh flattered himself that Mrs. Erskyne's britschka, with its miscellaneous contents was approaching too, he began to grow fidgetty touching the result of his first interview. Although, in pursuance of Miss Elbany's somewhat professional advice, he strove to calm down the instigations of the busy devil by which he was possessed, he discovered the impossibility of taking his usual ride, or assuming his ordinary routine of occupation. He found himself wandering with restless and listless anxiety, from one room to the other;—examining the notes and cards of invitation on Frederica's writing table; and flinging into the street—with a very superfluous degree of vivacity—a little sprig of myrtle which he discovered on her toilet!—a token accidentally preserved

of one of her horticultural progresses with old Mrs. Martha Derenzy, but attributed by Sir Brooke to a more interesting source.

Already the roar of carriages, proclaiming the springtide of the ocean of fashion, began to subside into the occasional rumble which announces the desertion of the dusty streets for the still more dusty park; while the swift glancing of the cabriolet or tilbury, conveying the select vestry of the great world from their refuge in St. James's-street to the homes rendered dear to their hearts by a vicinity to the stables, evinced that the duties of the day must now assume an equestrian form. The melodious tingle-tang of the postman's bell echoed from the distant wilds of Hanover-square like the sound of a heifer straying from its herd in the lonely pastures of Appenzel; while the ingenuous youths of Gunter and Grange were seen depositing, at successive areas, certain small round pails such as might have graced the dairies of that lactescent district. To the mind of Sir Brooke Rawleigh, however, they conveyed only a remote announcement of the hour when the

streaming Moselle and the flashing Champagne are produced from those icy receptacles to paralyze the human frame—the hour when cutlets are eaten, and domestic feuds forgotten, to find

Still no britschka appeared! A second time the scarlet uniform of the letter-man was seen scudding along Bruton-street from the square; plainly marking out the peculiarly correspondent houses on his road, by lingering at their doors with a prolonged tintinnabulation of warning.—It was six o'clock—half-past—nearly seven;—and still no britschka appeared!

A bright thought suddenly illuminated that mind, which Sir Brooke had inadvertently proclaimed a great mind in his morning colloquy with Miss Elbany. He would go and dine at his club, leaving no message for Frederica; in order that on her return from her ill-chosen expedition, she might be distracted with doubts and anxieties equal to his own. Such are the nefarious projects which lend a charm to the preponderance of CLUBS in this conjugal and domestic metropolis! And if a lady's chosen retreat of leisure is to be branded with the oppro-

brious name of a *boudoir*, what term sufficiently expressive of sulkiness can be found to define those colossal receptacles for the infirm in temper or purpose of the male sex,—where the ill-humoured are not the more sociable for being gregarious?

“I will just wait a quarter of an hour, and see!” said Sir Brooke, in that sort of anxious tone which always prognosticates a delay of two or three quarters of an hour for the extension of a man’s views. But when these and more had passed away, and the house became impregnated with a savoury odour—proclaiming that the patties were burning in the oven, and the renettes on the stove—while Martin more than once introduced his rueful visage into the room with an inquiry, “whether dinner was to be served?”—he could no longer master his patience sufficiently to stay and watch the issue; but replying with mysterious ambiguity, that he did not dine at home, the injured man stalked out of the house,—taking his way towards Bond street, at a rate of speed which rivalled that of his lettered predecessor. But Thomas, who

was once more on the watch for his departure, no longer predicted any mischief from the Serpentine River;—his master had forfeited all romantic interest in *his* eyes by having returned with avidity to the cold fowl;—the experienced footman felt assured that the hour which flavours the aristocratic atmosphere of the West-end with an aroma of *vol-à-vents* and *purées*, such as in itself might almost dine a pauper, was not likely to be selected by a man of taste for *felo-de-se*! It is remarkable, that the feeding hour which so fiercely animates the instincts of the brute creation, only serves to tame down the energies of those equally carnivorous animals who are addicted to the stew-pan and the gridiron. A dinner-bell, which becomes a tocsin to the passions of the Exeter Change, is as soothing as Dante's "*squilla di lontana*," to the ears whose appurtenant eyes and mouths are accustomed to feast on the scientific compounds of Ude or Dolby.

Having ordered his dinner immediately on emerging from the mighty portico into the mighty vestibule of the mighty pile, destined to

assemble in daily congregation a couple of hundred pigmies of the fashionable Lilliput, Sir Brooke Rawleigh proceeded to beguile the interval of culinary preparation in the most abstruse chair of the most occult corner of the reading-room—at that hour nearly deserted; and as he ensconced himself within the profound shadow of a half-closed *jalousie*, he became invisible to all comers; with the exception of a little old gentleman, with a short pig-tail and a long nose, with whom he was only acquainted by name, who sat opposite wondering by what catoptrical process the honourable member sheltered behind the main-sheet of the vast Times newspaper, could manage to decypher its mysteries in a reversed position. Sir Brooke had, in fact, visited on this occasion the club he was least in the habit of frequenting; and he had the honour of being mistaken by his elderly critic for the learned Dr. Brewster.

But the policy displayed by poor Rawleigh in selecting for the deglutition of his stewed *veal aux petit pois*, a spot in which he was not accustomed to show his face more than twice

in the season, proved of very bad omen for the future interests of the Borough of Martwich; and in itself a highly inconsiderate action. While he was still ruminating behind his inverted newspaper on the disasters of his destiny, and wondering whether the remarkable event which had caused Lady Olivia Tadcaster to talk her unfortunate sister out of her sleep,—(a vice-versa as remarkable as the topsy-turvy position of his own studies)—had any reference to the indecorous proceedings of her niece,—a group of gentlemen entered the room to whom the presence of Sir Brooke appeared as little probable as their arrival was little agreeable to himself. Feeling quite unequal to general conversation, and dreading their allusions to his family dilemma, he contrived by elevating his paper screen, so as to bring his eyes on a level with the theatrical announcements,—(which, in their reversed aspect, as well as in the taste of the London public assigned to farce and melo-drama the precedent over what is called the *sterling* drama,)—to escape detection from their own. But alas!

this rash ambuscade proved only an aggravation of his former imprudence. He could not suppress his own sense of sound, as well as the sense of sight of the enemy.

"I tell you," said the snappish voice of Sir Robert Morse, who had not forgiven Frederick her Almack's desertion of himself in favour of the envied Calder, "I tell you she would not have dared conduct herself in such a manner if poor Rawleigh had been in town. Rawleigh, with all his faults, is fully aware of what is due to his family and to himself; nor would he have tamely submitted to such an outrage."

"Pooh! pooh!" cried Sir Mark Milman, seating himself at the round table in the centre of the room, and selecting a copy of the Quarterly Magazine, in order that his somnolent soul might burrow into the fleecy recesses of a long, soft, easy article, and torpify in cotton in the middle, "what signify Lady Rawleigh's sayings or doings to you? By circulating the tale, you authenticate the scandal;—to-day it runs the round of the clubs,—to-morrow of the newspapers;—and at length—"

But Sir Brooke was not destined to learn the catastrophe anticipated by Sir Mark Milman. From the moment the outline of his head darkened the half-closed *jalousie* with the announcement of a human presence within, one of those charming handmaidens of Flora who frequent the streets of the metropolis in the months of May and June, had taken her station opposite the window; where ever and anon she held up some faded branches of lilies of the valley and narcissus, enwrap in sheets unpoetically scribbled with a school-boy's exercise. For some time this exquisite nymph,—whose hands and face bore tokens somewhat too superficial that all flesh is dust,—contented herself with dropping, from minute to minute, a courtesy of supplication; but no sooner did Morse and Milman, and Traveller Broughley commence the dialogue so fraught with painful interest to the ears of Sir Brooke, than her pantomime expanded into speech,—and her speech into one of those curious specimens of autobiography,—“half song, half sermon,”—assuming alternately the Gilesian dialect, and the

morbid pathos of an evangelical tract. To listen to her "tale of woe," was to shut out all audience of his own; to end it with a constable or pacify it with a shilling, was to betray the secret of his ambushade!

To Rawleigh's infinite delight, however,—and oh! that such a circumstance should have ever tended to the delectation of a civilized being!—a hackney-coach stand was posted opposite the windows of his club;—and, in the midst of his distress, a fat good-natured country gentleman having scrambled into one of the vehicles on his way to the Blue Boar in Holborn, the damsel with the lilies dried her elaborate tears with a checked apron dirtier than her own face, and flew to attempt an attack upon one whose unsophisticated visage and top boots promised more sympathy in her "heart-rending case" than the members of a fashionable club, or of the Mendicity Society. As her murmurs died away amid the clattering of the dislocated limbs of No. 247, to whose window she had forcibly attached herself, the dialogue of the group at the round table ag-

became audible to "poor Rawleigh." It was now the learned Theban who was on his legs; and the subject of his eloquence would perhaps have been equally intelligible to his unseen friend, had it been phrased with the aid of the erudite speaker's confusion of Oriental tongues;—of the Doric of the King of Ashantee, —or the talkee-talkee of the Gold Coast.

"I knew him well in Italy," said Broughley, "and as my friends Gonsalvi and Bevilacqua used to observe, no British hand was ever more prodigal in adorning with gems the diadem of the Eternal City. From Tuscany to Rome, from Rome to Naples, his progress was marked with the munificence of a sovereign prince."

Sir Brooke had no difficulty in finding an antecedent for Mr. Broughley's "*him*," in the person of Lord Calder.

"Yet with all his splendours and abilities, I confess myself at a loss to account for Lady Rawleigh's partiality;—a partiality demonstrating itself in so unbecoming a time and place."

"They are all such a set!" cried Sir Robert Morse, with the impartiality that men of his class are prompt to display towards their bosom-friends. "There is Lannceston, whom nothing but his peerage keeps out of the Fleet—or the Penitentiary,—actually making love to his mother's companion; probably some strolling actress in disguise."

"And then Lady Olivia Tadcaster," observed Broughley, "what *can* exceed the absurdity of her conduct, unless that of her niece?—She has positively been introducing a set of ambulant mountebanks, the refuse of the Leipsic fair, into the first society in London, just because they happened to have an unpronounceable name, and to eat snails and sauerkraut without wincing."

"Ay! what was that business?" inquired Sir Robert. "Lady Barbara Dynley told me last night that she had positively been entrapped into a party to Richmond with a tribe of show-people."

"Now my dear Morse!—my dear Sir Robert,"—cried Milman, "why should you push the in-

vestigation further;—what matters it to you that two foolish women have made themselves ridiculous?—Leave them to the chastisement of their mutual reproaches.”

“What has become of Rawleigh all this time?” inquired Broughley; who on missing any member of society was apt to infer from his own propensities that he might be fishing for flexible stones in the Yellow Sea, or botanizing on the Alpusarres.

“Oh! Lady Rawleigh made it a condition on their marriage that he should go into the House, in order to insure his occasional absence from his own; so she persuaded him to deal with Lexley for the borough of Martwich, and last week they dragooned him down to make a bow to the corporation.”

Now this statement on the part of Sir Robert Morse, offensive as it was, afforded considerable solace to the wounded spirits of Sir Brooke;—the incorrectness of its facts, and unfairness of its deductions, were just so much evidence in favour of the innocence of Frederica. But his own situation was becoming extremely em-

barrassing. Although the voices of the interlocutors before him were not so elevated but that he might be supposed to have remained deaf to their intelligence, still he *had* heard and might hear further of their odious insinuations. To collar three full-grown men;—to seize the horrid Cerberus by whose calumnious bark he had been assailed and eject it from the window, would have been a work of difficulty, danger, and indecorum; and might possibly cause both the quarrel and its motive to be bruited over the town with all its injurious inferences touching the reputation of the Launceston family. He resolved, therefore, to attack the malicious triumvirate singly,—first by a demand for explanation, and secondly by wager of battle; being aware that even the best of Manton's pistols are but double-barrelled;—and that to subdue three enemies at once, is a feat only compassable by some Briarean wonder of Astley's Amphitheatre. The very paper in his hands shook and rustled with the suppressed struggle of his emotions!

But before Sir Brooke Rawleigh had fully

decided on the line of action he should pursue, and whether his extermination of Frederica's detractors should be summary or progressive, Milman and Morse had caught sight of the respectable long-nosed short-tailed gentleman, who was occupied in the perusal of an alphabetical list of the House of Commons near him; and being aware, from fatal experience, of those powers of colloquial oppression which render his narratives by no means so concise as his little queue, they motioned to Broughley to follow them and sidled out of the room;—the worthy member's visage being at all times as good at clearing the gallery as a political secret. They departed just in time; in another minute, the breathless waiter, who was in search of the proprietor of the spring-soup which now smoked in an adjoining apartment, entered as they fled across the hall, to summon Sir Brooke from his embeccement.

But what availed, or soup or matelote? The appetite of the wretched Rawleigh had departed with the fugitive slanderers; and not even the prospect of one of Lexley's "bachelor-

face" dinners could have increased his nausea! But although his disgust had attained its utmost eminence, his vexation was destined to a sensible augmentation when, on approaching the Julianne aforesaid, he perceived at an adjoining table,—having so completely finished his own meal as to have no further occupation but a toothpick, and a bottle of claret to interfere with his social propensities,—the man of all others he would have avoided at such a crisis! But on this occasion no friendly paper-screen could interpose to rescue him from the recognition of his friend; and Mr. Dynley now expressed as much joy on his arrival, as he had recently experienced on the flight of Milman and Co.

Mr. Dynley has been hitherto only collaterally introduced to the reader, in the person of his better half; a familiar vulgarism very aptly embodied by Lady Barbara, who was pretty and goodnatured, while the inferior moiety was cynical both in feature and humour. He was often called "the ugliest dog in London;" but on the whole, this by-word was

too social to designate a personage so tinged with rancorous malignity; nor could any thing less than the recommendation of a pretty popular wife, a gentlemanly address, and a certain degree of caustic originality, explain the endurance exerted by the fashionable world in his favour. The apparent aim of his conversation was to instil into the ears of his acquaintance, every drop of bitter personality he could gather for their annoyance throughout the world.

But such is the impotence of human will, and such the finiteness of human comprehension, that the discourse of the pacific and philanthropic Sir Mark Milman had been fated to cause severe pain to the sensitive bosom of the new member for Martwich, while the malicious intentions of Mr. Dynley were productive of solace and consolation beyond all power of prediction. His spite became as it were a balm to the wounds of "poor Rawleigh;" as the rattlesnake is supposed among the Indians to contain an antidote for its own venom.

No sooner was the silver tureen removed

from the table, so that its interceptive steam no longer obstructed his view of the countenance he was preparing to convulse with anger, than Dynley exclaimed in a cordial friendly way, that he would come and take his wine for company's sake at Sir Brooke's table; and without waiting for the acquiescence he knew could not be withheld, drew his chair and commenced his attack.

"Well, my dear fellow! and so you are in for Martwich?—I must fill my glass in honour of your success! I trust you have been on your guard with our friend Lexley;—between ourselves, there is not a greater ~~de~~ in nature than that plausible rascal;—he is like the lion who, dividing the spoil on all occasions, takes care to possess himself of unpin's share."

"On ~~this~~ occasion there was no spoil to divide. A proposition was made me, which my advisers thought a fair one,—I accepted,—and the business was concluded;—there could be no opportunity for my being *dane*, as you call it."

"Well! take care he does not entangle you

on first entering the House; he may manage to sell the *member* for Martwich as well as the borough, and without your finding it out."

"Thank you for the caution!—I will not prove myself a greater blockhead than I can help.—Waiter!—my cutlets."

"By the way, Rawleigh, it was well imagined of you to make your election fall on the day of the drawing-room; you left the scandal entirely on Lady Rawleigh's shoulders."

"I do not understand you," said Sir Brooke, reddening with a recollection of the insinuations of Morse.

"Ay! ay!—no wonder you consider it a blushing matter. Where on earth did you pick them up?—But I need not pluralize the charge; I cannot suppose that *you* would incur the risk of erasure from Lady Derenzy's will."

"You are as full of enigmas as a schoolboy's pocket-book."

"Oh! I do not mean to say that I was not acquainted with the family *myself* during my winter at Rome; Waddlestone was a great

man, *there*, with his subscriptions for the examination of the Tiber, and his institution of professorships;—I used to dine with him once or twice a-week. But I should have thought that no humanized individual would undertake the stigma of presenting a *Mrs.* Waddlestone;—I assure you Lady Rawleigh has set the world in an uproar with her magnanimity on the occasion. I apprize you, however, that she is universally blamed,—that the ‘Noes’ have it.”

“Thank God!” piously ejaculated Sir Brooke to the amazement of his companion, who entertained no suspicion from how vast a load of uneasiness he had redeemed the heart of the husband,—of obloquy, the fair fame of the wife. It would have been little less than martyrdom, to Mr. Dynley had he recognised his own agency in such an act of benevolence.

“Lady Rawleigh’s interference on the occasion was wholly unpremeditated,” observed Sir Brooke. “But say no more on the sub-

ject, for her conduct has my entire approbation."

"Insensible brute!" muttered Dynley, turning towards the table he had quitted, for a new toothpick.

"To be sure it is not half so bad as old Tadcaster's business!" resumed he, recovering his usual confidence. "No wonder she is off into Essex;—she never could have found courage to see 'The Czartobarlozkna Family' placarded at every corner of the street, after having proclaimed their noblesse de l'empire at every tabby tea-table in London. She has already announced a fête-champetre at her villa, by way of obliterating the scandal; and I hear Lady Rawleigh is to act as patroness on the occasion."

"Thank God!" again ejaculated Rawleigh, who was now relieved from all apprehension that Lady Olivia's flight into the country was caused by disgust at the proceedings of her niece. "Dynley! will you taste this Burgundy; it is really far from bad.

—This is a better dining-house than I expected;—the soup augured ill,—the cutlets were so-so;—but these quails are excellent, and the soufflée incomparable.”

Poor Sir Brooke!—his heart was little less light than that aerial consistency; and by the time he had finished his wine and his interview with the astonished Dynley,—who could not account for this sudden exhilaration without the aid of a single glass of Champagne,—he prepared to return to Bruton-street, a far happier man than when he quitted home. To fall down a precipice, and alight at the bottom without bruise or fracture, is so bewildering a catastrophe, that Sir Brooke Rawleigh may even be pardoned in this instance his total forgetfulness of an appointment with Mr. Lexley at Bellamy’s, for the arrangement of “certain preliminaries.”

Perhaps his satisfaction might have been in some degree moderated, had he been aware that while he was engaged in eating his dinner under the malignant eyes of Dynley the cynic,

—Frederica was busied with hers, beneath the partial gaze of Lord Calder. On their way to town his lordship had surprised the little party with a magnificent collation, in his sister Lady Rochester's apartments at Hampton Court.

CHAPTER III.

O my soul's joy!

If after every tempest come such calms,
May the winds blow till they have waken'd death,
And let the labouring bark climb hills of sea
Olympus-high!—If it were now to die
'Twere now to be most happy!

OTHELLO.

It is a pleasant speculation to remark on the happiness of a life, in which things of no moment give occasion of hope, self-satisfaction and triumph.

SPECTATOR.

It is time to prose a little! Novels,—especially such as affect to treat of fashionable life,—are born to such an inheritance of shame, it is so much the custom of dull or silly people of all ages and sexes to reprobate them with a sentence of contempt as the most frivolous.

flighty, useless, and condemnable productions of the press,—and to threaten their eradication as mere weeds of the garden of Helicon—that it becomes necessary from time to time to throw a heavy lump of marl on the surface, where it must lie for ever in unaffinitive disunion, in order to deceive the dunces into a belief that some mysterious process of improvement is carrying on for their advantage. A few long sentences, sufficiently complex and ungrammatical to perplex the mind of a booby, impart a wondrously philosophical character to a work of fiction; while a little high-flying touch of metaphysics ensures from the lesser fry of critics a plausibility or two, such as “The indications contained in the work before us of a superiority of mind worthy a more ambitious task, induce us to hope that its powers may one day be devoted to nobler purposes!”

But the rational reader,—the reader who expects to find in a novel,—in the “small tale” so defined by our great lexicographer—(a long word expressly introduced for the gratification

of the dunces), only those lighter elements of fiction which, like Cowper's Souchong "cheer but not inebriate," and captivate the attention without injury to mind or morals,—the rational reader is requested to favour Sir Brooke and Lady Rawleigh with his company three pages hence. Let him assure himself that not a syllable shall be written during his absence worthy the attention of a reasonable being. And now for our prose!—

It is a remarkable evidence of the infatuation of the human mind,—of its subjection to the trammels of custom,—of its limitation within the narrow boundaries of precedent,—that we should continue to mould the character of our sons and daughters on the colossal and unnatural model of ancient example. The heroic sullenness of "Achilles's wrath" is inflicted on the admiration of some incipient ensign of the Guards, who would be sent to Coventry by his mess, or to the family-vault by his bosom friend, for a similar display;—while the acuteness of Ulysses in his deception of Polypheme is given as a lesson to those

who would be expelled the chancery bar for similar practices. The onerous perils of a breach of promise are neglected while the student is attached by the magic of numbers to the worthless cause of Dido's or of Ariadne's lover; and Cicero and Demosthenes are offered as models of eloquence to small senators in corduroy, who would be committed to the sergeant-at-arms or the care of Dr. Warburton, for attempting to insult the House with cut-and-dried oratory of a similar class!

Painters, we are told, are obliged to exaggerate their colouring and introduce gaudy hues upon the canvass, in order to allow for the mellowing hand of time; and on these grounds, it may perhaps be advisable to form the moral qualities of youth on a gigantic framework. Had Sir Brooke Rawleigh committed to memory at Rugby the adventure of Scævola, with its accompanying notes of admiration, he might not have been so indecorously startled by the burning sealing-wax. Had the implacable Dynley been properly tutored with the mythological warning of the twice-flayed Marsyas,

he would not have inflicted a second dose of torture on the innocent member for Martwich!

Nevertheless it appears that the heroic virtues of antiquity are only susceptible of adaptation to our own times, by such cutting and contriving as produces much waste of time and excellence. The fortitude of the Spartan youth who allowed the reptile he had stolen to eat into his heart rather than avow its concealment, was far too big a virtue for Sir Brooke Rawleigh as he sat agonized by the flower-girl's importunities behind the Times newspaper, rather than acknowledge his eaves-dropping; — and had Frederica, on arriving at Hampton Court, and finding the impossibility of escaping Lord Calder's dinner, attempted to ford the Thames after the fashion of the noble Clelia, she would only have caught cold in refrigeration of her superfluous ardour.

The truth is that heroism, magnanimity, fortitude, and other gigantic virtues of the veteran battalion of old moralities, must abate a cubit of their stature in the assumption of the farthingale and hoop, the peruke and frock-coat.

It is not to be supposed that Coriolanus would have stood in the market-place of Martwich in one of Meyer's surtouts; or Marius seated himself among the ruins of St. Martin's-le-Grand in a water-proof hat. Numa Pompilius would have scarcely adventured the rheumatism, had his Egeria been only Martha Gunn in a Brighton bathing-machine;—or Regulus returned to his tortures, had he been disguised as a lady's footman at Granville. Railroads and steam-vessels do not admit the portability of extraneous matter,—even in the exaggeration of virtue;—and human creatures are beginning to contemplate human existence through the wrong, or diminishing end of the telescope. It would be a laudable effort, therefore, if the spirited proprietor of the "Family Library" were to cause one of his domestic philosophers to compile an octavo edition of the folio examples of the antique world, for the use of the clubs and both Houses of Parliament.—But more of this hereafter; our lector and the Rawleighs are waiting!

The hilarity of Sir Brooke was somewhat

checked when, on his return to Bruton-street, he found that the club-dinner intended as a punishment to his wife, had been wholly superfluous,—that the patties were the only sufferers,—that Frederica was still away;—and uneasiness soon took the place of resentment in his worthy bosom. The only arrivals since he quitted home, were a pink satin P.P.C. from Mrs. Woodington, who had raised the siege of Launceston, and marched off to Paris after old gouty Lord Twadell;—and a card of invitation,—on whose vast extent Napoleon might have pricked out the plan of one of his Italian campaigns,—from Mr. and Mrs. Waddlestone, of Waddlestone House, for a dinner at a month's warning!—Sir Brooke could devise no motive for the tarrying of the wheels of the britschka, except some fatal accident; and having ascertained from Thomas's malicious information, that “the off-wheeler was a rum 'un, and looked queerish,”—he sat himself down to execrate Newman's indiscretion in sending out restive horses; and his own, in having abandoned the protection of his innocent

and unoffending family, to encounter the punch and poundage of the Black Bull!—

Those who have encountered the torture of watching and waiting, hour after hour, for the arrival of a truant,—who know the full force of anguish included in the Italian proverb "*Aspettare chi non viene*," can appreciate the flutter of spirit,—half pain—half pleasure,—which agitated Sir Brooke, when at length an unusual noise in the street and a knock of less than footman's artificiality, announced the arrival of the travelling carriage. It was too dark to look out and observe by whom his wife was accompanied, nor had he much leisure for the inquiry; for with a step fleet as youth, health, and happiness could make it, Frederica bounded up stairs and threw herself into his arms! He had no time for the assumption of dignity,—of the cold, dry, marital, scrutinizing air he had all day projected; *there* she was,—with her arms clinging round his neck,—her heart beating with delight against his own;—and, unless he was much mistaken—a tear transmitted from her cheek to his.

But if a tear, it was only a tear of joy ! When at length she drew back her face to contemplate his looks, and utter some of those complaints against the length of his absence which so gently cheer the moment of return, the expressive tenderness which irradiated her eyes and flushed her cheek, could not be mistaken as arising from any impulse but that of unqualified happiness at seeing him again. She had forgotten all her vexations,—all her apprehensions;—she had thrown the showy bonnet irreverently on the floor, while the loosened tresses hung down in unseemly disorder;—she had dragged him back to the easy chair, and was kneeling on the Turkish cushion at his feet;—his hand in hers,—and in her heart all that buoyancy of affection which the formalities of life so rarely allow to exhibit its vivid impulses ;—her beautiful countenance embellished by all the playfulness of a child,—by all the tenderness of a wife !—

While Sir Brooke gazed on its captivating brilliancy, its still more subduing softness, he felt the utter impossibility of attaching the stigma of suspicion to such a face, to such a

woman. Truth and ingenuousness were written there by the authentic hand of Nature ;—he no longer cared or inquired whether Calder had been the companion of her journey home, whether Lord Putney had been agreeable, or Vaux entertaining ;—with such an expressive smile beaming from her lips, he would have received her in perfect confidence from a journey with Don Giovanni in an air-balloon !—

Between lovers,—wedded lovers, parted and reunited for the first time,—a thousand nothings arise for discussion, which to all other persons, including the novelist and the reader, would be insupportably tedious ; and perhaps there is no feeling more characteristic of the charm of arriving at *home*, and being restored to the society dearest to our hearts, than the certainty that *all* may now be said,—that every word will create an interest—every adventure, sympathy ; that instead of assuming the factitious abridgment of general conversation, to be ourselves, and quite ourselves, is to confer a favour as well as a personal relief.

And Frederica was not only herself, and

quite herself on this occasion, but never had that self appeared so matchless in the eyes of her husband. There was not the slightest reminiscence of Almack's in the entangled locks of her disordered hair;—not a trace of the Drawing-room in the almost infantine smile through which her white teeth shone with the lustre of pearls. In her unconnected phrases and hurried narratives, no one would have detected her recent companionship with the stately Calder, or the pedantic Vaux; purity of nature superseded the necessity for refinement; and she seemed to come back to her home, as a woman should ever come,—bringing cheerfulness and joy to its inmates! Nothing of “the Honourable Miss Rawdon” moderated her animation,—nothing of “Lady Rawleigh” dignified her aspect;—she was Frederica only—“dearest Frederica!”

Even Martin, when he placed on the table the tea she had asked for on her arrival, forgave her the scorched patties and procrastinated dinner;—and tea being as it were a native dew, an unfailing source of chirruping to the fair

gossippers of England,—it was no longer necessary for “poor Rawleigh” to try to possess himself, by force of interrogation, of the itinerary and chronicles of her day of pleasure.

“And so you are really a fraction of the legislation!” cried Frederica, who was now busy with the arrangement of her cup and saucer. “Let me look at you, and see whether you are grown as wise as the man of Thessaly, —whether you wear the dignities of the senate with becoming gravity?—Only so, so!—You have borrowed nothing at present from Mr. Lexley, although you have paid him so largely. —Tell me—”

“Not one word about Martwich or Lexley, if you value my patience,—I have supped full of them;—but rather let me inquire what have you been doing yourself?”

“Every thing that is foolish, imprudent, and extravagant;—I have been committing a thousand follies from mere idleness, and am now ready to repent them with the most assiduous industry.”

“No, Fred.! you cannot alarm me! I can-

not be terrified by confessions uttered with a smile like that.—But what has made you so late?—have you had a pleasant day?”

“Delightful!—that is, the roads were very dusty, the races very tiresome, and the dinner stupid enough. But we had a most charming adventure;—oh! yes! it *was* a *delightful* day!”

Sir Brooke dulcified his tea with additional sugar and cream, exclaiming that it was strong, even to bitterness.

“But Martin tells me,” she resumed, “that you arrived at home before I quitted the door.—How was this, dear Rawleigh?—Why did you not stop the carriage?—Even if you were too tired to join our party, you might have allowed me the opportunity of remaining at home with you.”

“And lose your *delightful* day?”

“My day has been delightful only in comparison with yesterday and its predecessor, when I was absorbed by a most tiresome occupation—a little secret which you must allow me to keep from you till next week; but you are fully aware that I have lost one far more

agreeable through my ignorance of your return. Had you not assured me that you could not possibly arrive in town till to-morrow, I should have had an excellent excuse for Louisa Erskyne. Dearest Rawleigh! are you not ashamed of your own irresolution?"

"Not of my *irresolution*," replied Sir Brooke, involuntarily recurring to the unfair suspicions he had formed touching that secret so frankly announced. "But if I had indeed induced you to give up your engagement, Frederica, what would have become of the adventure?"

"Ah! I had totally forgotten it!—Well, after all,—as you *are* here again and not very likely to make a second journey to Martwich, I think I *am* glad you did not recal me. I dare say I should have been in your way;—I dare say you have been reading letters from Ruggs all day?"

"Not exactly!"

"At least you have not been riding with Lady Lotus,—"

"Do not swear it."

"But I will *protest* to you,—as Romeo says;

for Lady Lotus herself,—*your* Lady Lotus,—
your own dear Laura—”

“Nay! Frederica, it is now my turn to protest,—”

“was the heroine of my adventure.”

“I am quite disappointed;—I expected something romantic or mysterious.”

“You shall be amply gratified in both ways, if you will have patience with my story. You are to know that by some strange mistake,—by the attraction I suppose which is called negative,—our carriage was posted on the course next to that of your *bella e gloriosa donna*; a circumstance not likely to be agreeable to me at any time, and peculiarly unwelcome to-day, because she thought proper to amuse herself by making inquiries in a voice like the roar of a bison, about my friend Mrs. Waddlestone—‘my interesting friend Mrs. Waddlestone, of Waddlestone;’ to the infinite vexation of Louisa Erskyne, who perceived that the sound attracted the notice of the neighbouring carriages, and to the infinite disgust of

Lord Calder, who saw that she was only intent on mortifying and annoying me."

"Very silly, and very ill-bred!—but take breath, you are on the verge of getting angry."

"Angry! I was furious!" said Frederica with a smile of the gentlest grace. "But really when I saw her little old quiz of a Sir Christopher put its yellow head out of the collar of its coat, like a tortoise on a sunshiny morning, I thought of *you*, Rawleigh, and forgave her petulance. I do not wonder that she dislikes me."

"I should, very much,—if I thought such a thing possible," said Rawleigh kindly. "But go on."

"In the course of the morning, Lady Lotus was not much amended in her favourable dispositions towards me; for thanks to the abundance of our popularity or our Champagne, Mrs. Erskyne's carriage was constantly surrounded with fashionable visitors, while that of the Lotus was surrounded with outriders, and nothing else."

"No asperity, Fred."

"Poor woman!—I am very little inclined to be ill-natured concerning her; for she became a severe sufferer in the sequel."

"Indeed?"

"No *partiality*, Rawleigh;—she deserved all the punishment she received."

"Poetical justice!"

"Poetical? with that little lump of prose by her side!"

"Order—order!—my dear Frederica, and proceed with your explanation."

"When the time came to put to the horses that we might return to town, Lady Lotus, who had followed us down, and probably swallowed more road-dust than was agreeable to a person accustomed to see nothing but gold-dust, resolved that she would at least precede us on our way home; and I perceived her repeatedly whisper to her servants in a singular manner, and her servants to the post-boys."

"Giving them orders to take the lead?"

"Exactly!—but without perceiving that the

position in which the carriages stood, rendered it impossible to extricate either without much temper or—much danger. The moment her horses were set in motion our wheels became locked; and while Louisa and I screamed to them to stop, *your* Lady Lotus kept urging them on. At length, one or two taxed carts round us made off to leave plenty of room for the mischief!—I was terrified to death!”

“ Foolish woman ! ”

“ I trust *that* is intended for Laura ?—Well ! you do not appear alarmed ?—I have a strong inclination to leave off like Scheherazade by way of retribution.”

“ How can I feel alarmed ?—Do I not find you here safe by my side ? ”

“ But you are by no means certain that poor Lady Lotus is not dying of her contusions at the inn at Moulsey.”

“ I have too much confidence in your Christian mercy to be apprehensive.”

“ Well then, the affair ended by the two carriages being dragged down the hill together, with their horses plunging and their in-

mates shrieking, till at length Sir Christopher's wheel came off in the struggle; and when I had courage to open my eyes after the crash, I saw Mr. Vaux trying to lift up the overturned barouche; while Lord Putney was assisting Lady Lotus out of the dust, and a stranger was trying to persuade the little old man—who was rolled up like the millepedes,—to uncurl himself and own he was unhurt, which fortunately he could do with a very safe conscience."

"What an absurd affair! I really thought Lady Lotus had more sense. But what became of them,—for I conclude their carriage was too much broken to take them back to town."

"We were in a horrible fright lest *we* should be obliged to crowd them into ours; when I had the satisfaction of hearing the stranger offer them the use of his phaeton."

"But who and what were the stranger and his phaeton?"

"Both dark, both handsome, and both mysterious; the carriage, however, was new,

and its owner older than Lord Calder. Both had been stationed close before us on the course, and formed a subject of conjecture to us in our intervals of idleness ;—we could not understand how a person so remarkably distinguished-looking could be a total stranger to our whole party and its visitors.”

“ And did you make out ? Have you discovered this great unknown ? ”

“ Not in the least ; although, to gratify our curiosity we persuaded him to accept the vacant seat in our carriage as far as Hampton Court, where he said he was engaged to dinner ; and I had the affliction of seeing his phaeton drive off with Lady Lotus sobbing, and Sir Christopher as dumb as a dormouse, without the possibility of asking her in his presence to whom she was indebted for so much good-nature.”

“ But in a half-hour’s drive, surely two such determined women as Mrs. William Erskyne and yourself were enabled to defraud a man of his name ? ”

“ No—we discovered only that our hand-

some stranger was very well informed, highly bred, and extremely intelligent;—but whether a Duke incognito, or the King's head-cook, remains a problem."

"But if he were a man of any consideration, Calder would have known him by sight."

"And so he did,—perfectly; but could not recollect where his person had become familiar to him. Mr. Vaux, too, remembered having repeatedly met him. And when we stopped at the Palace, Lord Calder was so much pleased with his manners and conversation that he even begged him to join our little party."

"Rather a rash measure with a perfect stranger."

"So he seemed to think; but he excused himself with great self-possession and politeness.

"Perhaps he thought that *he* had got into strange company."

"No, indeed!—for when he first came up to our carriage, immediately after the accident, and found me crying, he exclaimed, 'Pray

Lady Rawleigh do not alarm yourself; believe me your friends are more frightened than hurt."

"And you are *sure* you never saw this captivating personage before?" said Sir Brooke, looking fixedly at his wife.

"Quite certain,—or I *must* have been struck by his very superior attractions."

"Umph!—a strange business altogether. And did you see no more of him?"

"Oh! yes,—a great deal;—after dinner we walked in the palace-gardens till the horses were ready;—and in one of the most remote avenues, walking quite alone in a mood of sentimental melancholy like Penruddock's,—we overtook our lost treasure."

"Who instantly joined you?"

"No!—we joined him; and would not be shaken off till we walked him back to the palace; and he put us all into the carriage, apparently very glad to get rid of our importunities."

"Neither Vaux nor Calder are men whose society is considered unacceptable."

"Nor are Louisa Erskyne and Frederica Rawleigh persons usually shunned by the male creation," said her ladyship, smiling archly at his want of courtesy. "And I must confess that for my own part I tried to make myself as agreeable and conciliating as I possibly could, not only to rival Penruddock's attraction with our party, but to tempt him to discover himself."

"Miss Elbany was right this morning, Frederica! You certainly *are* candid amid all your indiscretions."

"Miss Elbany venture a remark to *you* on my character?—how extremely impertinent! And *this* morning?—You told me you had not yet seen mamma."

"I did not disturb Lady Launceston; but I sat in Charles-street nearly an hour."

"You must have found the society of that girl extremely attractive."

"I did indeed, Fred.!—almost as fascinating as that of the mysterious unknown of Moulsey Hurst."

"What could she find to say to you that lasted a whole hour?"

"To utter your praises!"

"I am highly flattered by her officious politeness; I should be much obliged to her to find a more willing theme for her sickening encomiums."

"My dear, you are very far from just towards that poor girl.—As she herself observed, you have done nothing but insult her ever since you arrived in town."

"She contrived then to mingle *some* blame in her very prolix eulogies? I am beginning to wonder less that you did not stop the carriage this morning, now I find you had so excellent an occasion to amuse yourself. Even Rugg's accounts cannot rival the attractions of Miss Elbany."

"As I told you before, my love, you are strangely prejudiced against that poor girl!—and only because she is twice as handsome, and clever, and agreeable, as any woman we meet in society. It is not her fault that

your mother is so partial to her, and Launceston so much in love with her. But I shall certainly take him to task the first time I get hold of him alone; for if, as you say, he is engaged to this tallow-chandler's daughter, he has no right to sport as he does with Lucy's feelings."

"How do you know he sports with her?—Was Launceston in Charles-street this morning?"

"No!—we were quite alone."

What angry rejoinder might have broken from the lovely lips of Frederica, it is impossible to guess, had not Martin at that moment entered the room to take away the tray.

By way of exhausting her vein of displeasure on some more legitimate subject, she now examined Mrs. Waddlestone's presumptuous card of invitation with an air of as much abhorrence as if it had been steeped in the unctuous caldron of her husband's speculative commerce; and with Sir Brooke's consent, sat down to indite a negative reply, as frigid

as if it emanated from those icy depositories
which have already served to adorn these pages
with the far-famed names of Robert Gunter
and Co.

CHAPTER IV.

I oft have heard him say how he admired
Men of the large profession, who could speak
To every cause, and things mere contraries,
Till they were hoarse again.

JONSON'S VOLPONE.

It is a very remarkable circumstance that the transition from the electoral body to the senate, from the population to the legislation, from the taxee to the taxor, from the licentious to the licensed proser, produces a much greater change in any man who is likely to pass through the House with as little notice as a turnpike-bill, than in one whose qualities are of a nature to attract the attention and admiration of king, lords, and commons. Fox or Sheridan, Hob-

house or Peel, may have been scarcely conscious of this change in their estate,—for whether representing or represented, their eminence is of an unquestionable degree ; but it is astonishing the difference produced in the tone of a Sir Brooke Rawleigh by the letters M. and P.—in appendix to his name !

It has been already asserted, without any intended disparagement of the honourable member for Martwich, that although a man of good abilities,—*good*, because equal to every demand arising in the station of life allotted to him by Providence,—he was far from a brilliant man. He had a sound head and a sound heart, and was as little likely to attract the attention of the world by excesses or absurdities, as by the display of marvellous intellectual endowments ; and although no more than on a par with four out of eight men of his own condition,—as they may be rated by their conversation at the dinner-tables of western London,—he never said a silly thing, nor was guilty of an exceptionable action. Happy the state which boasts a majesty of such citizens among her sons !

Perhaps there is no country in Europe where the general excellence of education redeems and cultivates mediocrity of mind into such valuable qualities as England. A free government and a liberal faith, by affording exercise to the faculties thus produced, combine to elevate them into importance; and the man who in France would become a mere sensualist, in Austria a brute, in Spain a bigot, in Italy a villain or a nonentity, is trained by the English system of education into a useful country gentleman, and a valuable member of society.

Such was Sir Brooke Rawleigh;—such had he been ever taught to believe himself by the esteem of his neighbourhood, the respect of his household, the admiration of Lady Derenzy and her sister, and the favourable acceptance of society at large. But the main point of his intellectual deficiency was want of decision;—he had the elements of judgment in his mind,—clearness of perception and a strong sense of right,—but he wanted the power of bringing them together for use, and the self-reliance which affixes the die of currency to real ability.

The Emperor Joseph II., in despatching his edicts to the states of his extensive empire, is said to have invariably accompanied the mandate with a second courier bearing its amendment or suspension; and Sir Brooke never hazarded an important opinion, without the addition of a species of "errors excepted" clause,—destroying the whole authority of his words.

But so long as his career was limited to a subordinate march of existence, where his infirmity of purpose was unimportant to the world and therefore invisible to himself, he remained on easy terms with his own understanding; checking Mr. Ruggs, lecturing the improvident Launceston, gratifying his neighbours Lord Lawford and Lord Huntingfield with an equality of intellect united with considerable diffidence in its exertion, and amazing Mrs. Martha Derrenzy and her coterie with his prodigious information on agricultural and political topics. The rector of Rawleighford, Dr. Fisher, was the only person capable of appreciating the deficiency in the mental powers of his patron; but like most men who have achieved the dignity

of the buzz wig, he attributed the fault solely to the extreme youth of Sir Brooke, whom—
at nine-and-twenty—his sexagenarian soul regarded as a promising boy. He was, besides, a worthy man, and a conscientious divine; and was too well aware of the value of his young friend's moral qualities, not to venerate him infinitely more than if he had been capable of a political squib, or a popular romance.

But the time was now come for Sir Brooke Rawleigh to form a painful appraisement of his own powers; and perhaps there is no species of personal humiliation so grievous to a man's feelings, and so pernicious to his temper, as that which arises without the malicious intervention of others. He had always expected to derive considerable self-importance from his seat in Parliament: instead of which, he became lowered in his own esteem on taking his place among his peers. A country gentleman of good estate, living at the end of his own avenue,—a Colossus to his tenants, a Solon to his steward, a Chesterfield to his clerical incumbent,—is at once the most independent and the most self-

satisfied of human beings.—He is a species of perpetual dictator. Unharassed by the contrarieties of a factious and fractious Parliament, unmolested by the intrigues of a mayor of the palace, he may exclaim from his authoritative library chair

Here is my throne;—kings come and bow to it!

But this pleasing delusion ends at Hyde-park-corner; and once installed in the Chapel of St. Stephen's is stifled as a disgraceful and fatuitous error within the soul of the enlightened landholder. Napoleon invited Talma to Erfurt to "act before a pitful of kings;"—and a country member finds himself reduced to his natural level in a houseful of squires.

It was not, however, the consciousness arising from this species of social extinction, from the companionship of such landed proprietors as the Russells, Beaumonts, Hugheses, Whitmores, Westerns, Fawkeses, Sebrights, Cokes, or Sumners, that Sir Brooke Rawleigh derived his more authenticated notions of his own consequence. It was from the discovery that he was now in-

corporated in a body where his voice was only endurable in the utterance of "Ay," or "No;" where his opinion was without influence, and his presence without interest!

It is generally to be observed that persons whose spirit is unduly repressed in one place, award themselves a liberal compensation by its exercise in another. In proportion, accordingly, as Sir Brooke Rawleigh became conscious of the mortifications of his political subordination in the House of Commons, he began to augment his importance in his house in Bruton street;—considering it necessary to maintain his personal dignity as the master of Rawleighford,—as the heir-presumptive of the Derenzys, and the husband of the beautiful Frederica Rawdon.

He was not conscious of the alterations in his views and demeanour, whereby he ran so much risk of growing disagreeable and ridiculous; nor did the partial affection of his wife admit of her becoming more enlightened than himself in this particular; but one point of the change operated in his domestic position by his senatorial duties, could escape neither

Frederica's notice nor her regret; the daily-recurring absence, ensured by the diligent attention of the new member to his public duties,—and the hurry and weariness of spirit with which he at length returned to the comforts of home and the society of his wife. No wonder that she should seek refuge from the solitary dulness of her deserted dwelling in the amusements fitted to her age;—in the animated sallies of Mrs. Erskyne's conversation, and the flattering blandishments of Lord Calder's devotion.

It was some days after the adventure and misadventure of the Hampton races, that Lady Rawdon, among the duties of her morning drive, projected a visit to Mrs. Martha Derenzy; an incident which usually acted as a soporific for the rest of the day. If Lady Launceston's mansion exhibited the awful stillness of elegant valetudinarianism, Mrs. Martha's was more than equally paralyzed by the utter stagnation of dulness and mediocrity. The house itself stood on what is called the shady side of the street, in order to avoid the rare enlivenment of a

straggling London sunbeam ;—the attendants were cased in suits of sober pepper-and-salt ;—the floors were carpeted with gray drugget ; a moping linnet hung in one corner of the sepulchral drawing-room, apparently infected by the dinginess of its cage, and sobriety of its attendants ;—two portraits of Luther and Melancthon were suspended in black frames from the slate-coloured wall ;—and in the gloomiest corner of this gloomy apartment, at a table covered with faded green baize, sat Mrs Martha Derenzy and her worsted work ! It was not that her three thousand per annum was so exclusively devoted to the support of the charitable institutions, in whose printed lists she was somewhat superabundantly fond of observing her own name, which produced these penurious characteristics in herself and her appurtenances ;—but she was an enemy to all innovation. —Undisturbed by the cares of matrimony and maternity, she had vegetated for the space of sixty-four years in that very abode ; and considering it a sort of respectful testimony to

the memory of the old dowager grandmother Derenzy by whom she had been brought up, to maintain every thing precisely in the same order she had noticed it half a century before; Mrs. Martha was careful that even the drugget and the baize, and the linnet, when worn out by the natural progress of years, should always be renewed in the exact shade of their original dinginess.

In such a spot as this, the youthful beauty of Lady Rawleigh seemed to acquire an almost unnatural radiance, and her voice to wake an echo of gladness such as those walls were rarely taxed to reverberate. Nor was the old lady herself insensible to the charm. The only feelings of sensibility in which she had ever been known to indulge were lavished on her only sister, the mother of Sir Brooke, from whom they had been transferred to her exemplary nephew; while the entire respect and wonderment of her mind were engrossed by Lady Derenzy, the wife and widow of her elder brother. It was the knowledge of this

partiality which had postponed Frederica's visit to Queen-Anne-street, ever since the fatal offences of the drawing-room.

"Well my dear Lady Rawleigh," said she, replacing her spectacles in their well worn morocco case, "I was afraid you had forgotten me. I have never once seen you to wish you joy on our dear Brooke's advancement. I was saying last night to Miss Hunter, during the deal—for I generally manage to make up my cassino table, notwithstanding the gay doings that are going on—said I, any one might think my niece had got into Parliament instead of my nephew, for I have quite lost sight of her; and Miss Hunter could not for the life of her help laughing."

"I have been half afraid to call here," said Frederica, frankly, "being aware that I was so unfortunate as to offend Lady Derenzy in the affair about Mrs. Waddlestone. Nothing would grieve me more than to displease any of my husband's relations; but in this instance I had to choose between wounding the feelings

of my brother, and losing the good opinion of a mere connexion."

"And your decision, Lady Rawleigh, did you honour. Our dear Sophronia is a noble creature; I do not suppose that the court of Great Britain has at any time boasted among its aristocracy so brilliant an example of beauty, elegance, talents, accomplishments, and high-breeding; and I am well aware that whenever my sister-in-law deigns to show herself in society, every one is anxious to receive the law from her lips, on all points of fashionable etiquette."

Lady Rawleigh with difficulty repressed a smile, as she contrasted this florid family portrait with the harsh reality of Lady Derenzy's withered person and obsolete address.

"But Sophronia has her prejudices. Engrossed by her studies and contemplations, it would be disagreeable to her to live (as I do) in the centre of the gay world; and it would be requiring too much of her to conform (as I do) to the habits of the new generation. When

my sister-in-law expressed her displeasure at the condescension you were pleased to show to Mrs. Waddlestone, she was not aware, my dear, that you were first tempted to make her acquaintance at our cousin Mrs. Luttrell's, or that it was *myself* who engaged you to pay her the first visit. All this has been properly explained; and Sophronia has restored you to favour on learning that you were solely influenced in your conduct by deference to the opinion of the elder branches of the family."

Frederica was not quite prepared for the turn given by Mrs. Derenzy to her proceedings; but she was very willing to accept an interpretation which rescued for the present the name of her brother from implication in the business. Having found from Launceston's confessions that he had not yet made his proposals to the soapboiler, but was admitted into the family merely as a lover on probation, she was still in hopes that some more honourable method might be discovered to retrieve the fortunes of the spendthrift, than that of dishonouring his

family by a plebeian alliance of so unsatisfactory a nature.

"And now, my dear madam, I am come after all only to bid you good bye," said Lady Rawleigh, when she could gain an interval from Miss Hunter's sayings and Mrs. Watts's doings; "I am going to-morrow out of town."

"You amaze me!—When the late Mr. Rawleigh sat for Droitwich, my poor dear sister made it a point never to leave London till the end of the session. You amaze me!"

"Oh! I have no thoughts of Warwickshire at present; I am only projecting a visit of a few days to my aunt Olivia, who has a very pretty place in Essex, and is about to give a breakfast at which she wishes me to preside. We were both anxious that Rawleigh should contrive to accompany me; but he assures me it is totally impossible, and Lady Olivia is so eager for the fête, that I am under the necessity of leaving him."

Frederica was surprised to observe that this intelligence produced in Mrs. Derenzy something more nearly resembling agitation than

she could have anticipated. The old lady opened her spectacle-case,—shut it again,—displaced her balls of worsted,—half rose from her seat, and after various little preparatory hems observed in reply, “I think, my dear niece, although we have not yet been quite a year acquainted, you will do me the justice to acknowledge that you have never observed any symptoms of mischief-making in my character.”

Lady Rawleigh, somewhat awed by this oracular preamble, assented with a clear conscience to the proposition.

“Although I have myself thought fit to abstain from entering into the marriage state,” said Mrs. Martha, “no woman in this world is more profoundly penetrated with the sacredness of the institution, or the sin of attempting to disturb the confidence and happiness of wedlock.”

Frederica, who began to suspect that Rawleigh had commissioned his aunt to read her a little lecture of warning on the subject of Lord Calder’s attentions, prepared herself to listen with becoming deference to an exercise of family

eloquence which, however superfluous, was well-meant, and inoffensive in a tête-à-tête. But no sooner had she placed herself in a posture of attention, than Mrs. Derenzy inquired whether she happened to be intimately acquainted with Lady Huntingfield.

“She is one of my Rawleighford neighbours, and a person whom I highly respect. But I fear I am not a favourite; I suspect I have taken a place which she always wished might fall to the lot of her own daughter, Lady Margaret Fieldham.”

“Quite a mistake I assure you! She was saying here, only yesterday, that she was thankful *her* daughter’s happiness had not been compromised by an union with my nephew.”

“She might have waited for some expression of Rawleigh’s inclinations on such a subject.”

“Ah! my dear!” said Mrs. Derenzy, shaking her head.

“You quite alarm me!”

“I fear he has been *much* to blame.”

“Who has been to blame?—not Sir Brooke, I am certain.”

"Your infatuation does *you* honour; but it only aggravates his fault."

"Dear Mrs. Derenzy,—pray be more explicit."—

"Young men, I have always heard, *will* be young men;—but I must say I *did* entertain a different opinion of my nephew!—so lately married,—so charming a wife!"—

"You will drive me to distraction by all this mystery! What *has* Rawleigh been about? What mischief has Lady Huntingfield been inventing concerning my husband?"—

"My dear niece, Lady Huntingfield is incapable of a malicious action;—she is a very serious woman—"

"A very serious evil on this occasion."

"And she was the best friend and neighbour my poor dear late sister ever had. It was a view to such interference on my part as might perhaps work a reformation in the conduct of my deluded nephew, which alone induced her to favour me with her confidence."

It was now Lady Rawleigh's turn to seize on

the spectacle-case, which she opened and shut with unconscious vehemence.

“ If I am not mistaken, my dear Ma’am, there is a young person of some personal attractions resident in the family of your mamma ?”

“ Good heavens !” exclaimed Frederica, starting up. “ It is not possible that Rawleigh can have attached himself to that horrible Miss Elbany ?” and she wrung her hands at the mere supposition.

“ The very person !” ejaculated Mrs. Martha.

“ I do not believe a single word of it,” cried Lady Rawleigh, with spirit.

“ Nay ! my dear niece,—far be it from me to shake your amiable incredulity ;—I respect your blindness,—I love your obstinacy on such an occasion ; nor would any circumstance less peremptory than your departure from town, leaving my nephew open to the allurements of that misguided young woman, have unsealed my lips. It is not that I suspect any positive guilt, any moral turpitude in their conduct ;—still, decorum is to be respected, Lady Rawleigh,—

decorum *is* to be respected; and indeed, my dear ma'am, it does *not* look well for the credit of either Lady Launceston's house or Sir Brooke's character, that my nephew should be caught in the act of imprinting—but, pardon me the rest!—Delicacy would willingly gloss over an incident so unbecoming to all parties."

"No—no!—pray speak out—" panted Frederica, "since you have opened my eyes, oblige me by letting me know the worst. Who is the person who was so fortunate as to witness—" she stopped, and burst into tears.

"Oh! dear—dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Denzy, "what a pity that you should agitate yourself in this silly manner for a trifle! After all, it might have been only an act of politeness on my nephew's part; to be sure one must feel that it—does—seem a leetle odd that Lady Huntingfield, and the butler, and poor quiet innocent Lady Margaret Fieldham, should happen to have entered the drawing-room at the very moment of such a crisis;—and very silly they did all look it must be admitted. Lady Huntingfield declares that *she* never received

a salute of that description in the whole course of her life."—

"All this must be explained!" cried Frederica, drying her eyes and rising from her seat. "I will go to mamma,—I will appeal to Rawleigh,—I will not tamely submit to—"

"Hush! hush! my dear niece, be pacified!" said Mrs. Martha, offering her a bottle of eau de luce, which looked like a wedding present from Sir Charles Grandison to Harriet Byron. "Remember I must not have a single syllable of this business divulged,—remember I have confided it to you with a full trust in your honour. Reflect my dear ma'am, on what might be the consequences of a disclosure!—A duel between your deluded husband and Lord Huntingfield,—a separation between Lord Huntingfield and his lady,—an irreconcilable quarrel between my nephew and myself; and last of all, this giddy young woman—who after all may be more indiscreet than culpable—thrown out of bread."

"Thrown out of bread!" reiterated Lady Rawleigh, who at that moment could have

found it in her heart to order her rival thrown out of the window.

“For my sake, I really must insist on your silence; and for your own, accept an old woman’s advice, and do not leave London;—do not again expose your husband to the snares of a Dalilah!”

“Well—well!—I see I must obey your commands, and accept your counsel,” said Frederica, eager to get beyond the reach of observation, and indulge the paroxysms of tears now struggling in her bosom. “Good bye, Mrs. Derenzy; I will think of what you have so delicately and considerately acquainted me with, no more than is necessary for the regulation of my own conduct.—Good bye!” and without listening to the elaborate addenda which Rawleigh’s aunt seemed anxious to charge on the catalogue of his enormities, she flew down stairs at a rate which caused the reverend domestics to tremble with consternation; and getting into her carriage, caused it to be driven to the most remote wilds of the Regent’s-park. Like Cassius, she longed to

“weep her spirit from her eyes.”—She felt not the pavement as she passed;—she was unconscious of the vehemence with which she drew down the blinds, and threw herself into a corner of the chariot;—she noted not the pause at the turnpike,—the jerk with which they entered the iron gates;—she felt nothing but the tumultuous beating of her heart;—she heard nothing but the ocean-like hissing which seemed as if some heavy piece of ordnance had just pealed in her ears!

Such hypocrisy—such treachery!—Rawleigh so severe in his strictures on laxity of morals in other people;—professing such a devotion of attachment to herself,—such a respect for her mother,—such a deference to the opinion of the world!—A second Angelo,—a vile impostor on the respect of society,—a traitor to the tenderness of her own bosom!

And how, after all, was she to act in such a delicate dilemma?—Was there one human creature to whom she could deliberately confide the frailty of her husband and her own despair? It was needless of Mrs Derenzy to qualify the

mischief she had made by exacting a promise of secrecy on Frederica's part;—worlds would not have tempted her to utter a syllable in disparagement of her once loved, her faithless Rawleigh. Not that *she* felt the slightest displeasure against the officious aunt;—she was very far from cherishing Othello's opinion that “It is better to be much abused than but to know't a little.”—She resolved to know all,—to see all,—to assure herself of the worst by the utmost precaution of observation; and then,—no matter!—the time, the occasion would bring its own tremendous verdict on the transaction.

Next to the impulse of concealing her husband's dishonour, was that of disguising her own sufferings on the occasion; and it is astonishing how potently the pride of a female heart will operate in the suppression of grief, indignation, and even jealousy. Lady Rawleigh [had long been engaged to visit Sir Thomas Lawrence's private gallery that morning, on the introduction of Lord Calder, and in company with Lady Rochester and Mrs. Erskyne; for his lordship was too well prac-

tised in his art to allow her to suppose *herself* his object even in a party of pleasure. To make her appearance before these heartless and satirical people as a poor, weeping, neglected, injured wife, was out of the question; Mrs. Erskyne cherished about as much feeling in her bosom as in the diamond Sevigné that glittered thereon,—Calder had more than once hazarded an inferential sneer on her domestic susceptibility,—and Lady Rochester would have regarded her emotions on such a provocation as too homely for any thing but a housemaid!—No,—no!—She applied her handkerchief to her eyes for the last time; drew up the blinds to refresh them with a current of air; and rehearsing a little hysterical laugh as a trial of self-possession on passing Gloucester Gate,—desired the coachman, in a voice like the croak of a wood-pigeon, to drive to Russell-square. Lord Calder was conducting his sister up the steps of Sir Thomas's door at the moment she arrived; and on entering the gallery they found Louisa Erskyne already waiting. Without occupation

or interest beyond the excitement of the day's amusement, her restless spirit always prompted her to be beforehand on such occasions.

"You are indisposed?" said Lord Calder in an anxious under tone to Lady Rawleigh as they entered the room, in which the great artist had not yet made his appearance. "I fear you were persuaded to stay too late last night at Lady Blanche Thornton's!—Nothing can be so injudicious as to protract one night's amusement so as to interfere with the pleasures of the following day;—when next you find yourself yielding to the importunities of an officious hostess, remember the advice of an old epicurean and your headache of to-day,—and resist!"

"I have a wretched cold, for which I fancy I may thank our evening walk at Hampton Court last week," said Frederica, trying to rally her spirits; "but do not ask me to remember it, when once it is cured and forgotten."

"I might perhaps find it difficult to banish from my recollection any thing connected with

such a day of happiness," he murmured, drawing back to let her pass through the open doors of the gallery ; " but I could wish it had been less disagreeably preserved from oblivion with yourself."

Sir Thomas Lawrence, who boasted a friend as well as a patron in the munificent Calder, now made his appearance ; directing his attentions to Lady Rochester and Mrs. Erskyne, with whom he was well acquainted, with all the graceful assiduity which distinguished his address ; and receiving his lordship's presentation to Lady Rawleigh with a degree of scrutiny in his looks, plainly betraying that his painter's eye had been favourably prepared for her beauty. Although too cautious to allow even a glance of disappointment to escape him, it is probable that Frederica's ill-assured address and swollen eyelids impressed the refined president with a very moderate estimate of her charms. Except in the instance of Lebrun's celebrated picture of Madame de la Vallière weeping in her carmelite costume over the jewels she is about to resign, so lachrymose a visage never at-

tracted the admiration of a painter ! But scarcely was the introduction over and followed by the formal compliments mutually due, when the little party was startled from its task of admiring investigation by the arrival of an intruder. On turning from a half-finished picture of Lady Barbara Dynley, Frederica observed Sir Thomas in the act of shaking hands with their mysterious Hampton friend ; while Lord Calder was receiving his bow of distant recognition with an air of gratified urbanity. Could she have effaced from her recollection the odious incident recently engraven there by Mrs. Derenzy, she would have now been happy ; for till the moment of her discoveries concerning Miss Elbany and her cruel Rawleigh, nothing had been nearer her heart than to renew her acquaintance with the stranger of the Lotus adventure.

CHAPTER V.

After, her looks grew cheerful, and I saw
A smile shoot graceful upward from her eyes;
As if they gained a victory o'er grief.

SHIRLEY.

NOTHING promised however at present in favour of an elucidation. Sir Thomas Lawrence, perceiving from the recognition among his visitors that a previous acquaintance existed among them, did not dream of an introduction; and although Mrs. Erskyne, whose curiosity was piqued on the subject even more than that of Frederica, lent a vigilant ear to ascertain whether any sound resembling your grace, or your lordship, escaped the painter's lips in addressing his anonymous guest, nothing

transpired in the way of a personal interpretation.—But it was evident that the stranger and the president were on terms of too cordial a friendship to admit of any such formalities of conventional deference. Mrs. Erskyne still felt at liberty to believe him a royal highness if she chose. In the mean time, with the restless coquetry which distinguished all her movements, she attached herself to Sir Thomas, as to the lion of the moment; and while she affected to demand his notes of explanation for the instruction of Lady Rochester, who was looking at the pictures through a quizzing-glass longing to ascertain the proportions in which carmine and vermilion were introduced to produce the brilliancy of complexion in the Duchess of Richmond's exquisite portrait, she forcibly withdrew his attention from the group on which it would have been so much more usefully and satisfactorily bestowed; and whose critical progress through the gallery he was compelled to hear in tantalizing fragments. He perceived that Lord Calder was in a mood of

unusual loquacity, and exerting his conversational powers to the utmost.

There can scarcely be a greater misfortune to a man and those with whom he is destined to live in contact, than to be of sufficient importance, whether from rank or opulence, to sanction his being disagreeable whenever it suits his convenience.—Lord Calder was gifted with considerable mental powers, enhanced by cultivation, and prepared for active service by extensive intercourse with society. He was an elegant scholar,—had read much,—could talk well and plausibly on most subjects; and if superficial in his reasoning, and averse to profound disquisition, what was to be expected from a man with eighty thousand a-year, one of the oldest patents in the peerage, unimpaired health, and an unencumbered person?—What leisure had such a favourite of fortune for the subtilties of logic, and the severities of research?

But unfortunately he found so many persons with whom he was in the habit of associating,

contented to accept in conversation the minimum of his faculties, eager to applaud his slipshod commonplace, and to extol with ecstasy his poorest attempts at pleasantry, that he experienced no temptation to tax his intellectual stores to exhaustion for their amusement.—Like Quin, in his barn days, he was satisfied to play Othello *white* to a meagre audience. Nor was his lordship less economical of his powers of pleasing, than of his powers of entertaining; he was one of those individuals designated as “not *generally* agreeable;”—a definition usually applied to selfish and ill-tempered persons who are of sufficient consequence to disregard the feelings of their associates.

He was not, however, enamoured of his solitary reign.—Like Selkirk on his island, or Haroun Al Raschid on his throne, he was disgusted with his inert supremacy; and it was delightful to him to encounter an auditor worthy his exertions,—a combatant deserving his lance. On finding in the stranger a man of polished mind and exquisite judgment, he hastened to seize his idle spear; and with the greater eager-

ness that Frederica's presence would animate his arguments. Alas! he little imagined that *her* mind was wandering between Mrs. Derenzy's slate-coloured drawing-room, and the revolting scene of Sir Brooke Rawleigh's furtive indiscretions!

"I own it provokes me," said Lord Calder, glancing from the Satan of the president's gallery to the portrait of old Mrs. Locke which still graced the easel, "to hear the general outcry raised by the critics against portrait-painting, in favour of the historical school;—and the regrets annually doled out at the exhibition of the Royal Academy, that our gifted friend should have restricted himself to yonder specimen of his poetical inspiration, and devoted his abilities to the production of such works as this exquisite head."

"Professional critics," said the unknown visitor, "are seldom disinterested. The progress of our National School of Art is of very little importance in their eyes; or they would admit that in perfecting the department of portrait-painting we assure the first step to-

wards the establishment of a higher order of art. It is as the acquirement of facility of versification to a poet. Our century has scarcely yet reached the dignity of historical composition; but the rudiments of such an achievement exist just now in England with a far more brilliant promise than in any continental country."

"The merit of the English school of portrait-painting is as honestly recognised at Rome as the eminence of Thorwaldsen or Canova;—I have seen the Italian cognoscenti hanging over Lawrence's miraculous picture of Gonsalvi, as if they would penetrate into the secrets of his art," said Lord Calder.

"And yet there are frondeurs in Italy against the English tone of colouring;—men who look upon Rubens as a caricaturist, and esteem both Reynolds and Lawrence to be merely modified imitators of his extravagance. They talk of "fluttering," and "patchiness," and "want of harmony," and say that such vivid tints are neither to be found in the faces of Titian's nor of nature's manufacture. And they are right!—

Their Italian experience has never established such precedents in their mind;—their fervid skies and inert habits of life are little calculated to produce a similar freshness."

"It must indeed be admitted that England alone affords us the charm of such complexions as these," said Lord Calder, looking round on the female portraits, but eventually directing his smile towards Frederica's blushing face. "The diet of the French,—the stoves of the Germans and Russians,—the atmosphere of the Italians,—are fatal to the bloom of a female face, and the manly vigour of the masculine countenance; while our excess of field exercise, and the simplicity of our mode of nourishment, produces a higher tone of colouring. Even the most beautiful faces one sees on the Continent, are either bronzed by the sunshine of Italy, or rendered pasty and heavy by the oppression of over-heated apartments. There is not a country in Europe where youth lingers so long upon the countenance as England."

"I perfectly agree with you," said the stranger, with the air of a travelled man. "And ex-

quisite as we must admit the portraits of the Venetian school, as well as those of Raphael, Leonardo, and Guido, we may also assure ourselves that such portraits would not have been painted in England ; and that the great masters of Italy must have adopted a totally different tone and mode of colouring, had they become acquainted with nature in a harvest-field on the banks of the Severn, or a drawing-room on the banks of the Thames."

"This deduction is confirmed by the works of modern English artists who have been some time resident abroad ;" said Lord Calder. "Look at the pictures exhibited by Briggs, Davis, Partridge, and others, on their first arrival after a long estrangement from the brilliant colouring of British health."

"Vandyke affords perhaps the happiest medium," said the stranger ; "a man acquainted with nature in all her disguises, yet apparently born only to perpetuate the fairest, and noblest, and most poetical of her human productions."

"In one point," observed Lord Calder, lower-

ing his voice to a confidential pitch, "in one point, without even instituting a comparison touching the execution and mere painting of their pictures, we must acknowledge the superiority of Charles's artist over our own. Vandyke,—the most courtly of painters,—whose subjects always appear to have stood on a velvet footcloth to the sound of trumpets,—has the art of giving dignity without intellectuality;—his princes are lofty and graceful, without displaying more speculation in their eyes than is hereditary with the right divine. But our friend Lawrence is too apt to endow *his* sitters with *his* own elegance of mind;—all his female portraits beam with the sensibility of Psyche,—and all his male countenances appear instinct with genius."

"He has certainly irradiated the ponderous stupidity of more than one lordly visage," said the stranger, with a smile. "But look at Raeburn's portraits.—Accustomed to the intense and contemplative gaze of his Edinburgh contemporaries, he taught his lordlings to look

as if they were busy with a problem; while we involuntarily associate a pair of blue stockings with the fairest of his female faces."

"An insurmountable blemish!" cried Lord Calder; again directing his eyes towards the pure and unpretending loveliness of Frederica which borrowed much of its charm from the uncultivated simplicity of mind which abandoned every feature to the guileless impulses of her heart,—as if anxious to include her in their discourse,—as if unwilling to lose, even for the sake of an enlightened and unaccustomed companion, the smiles of such a face. But Lady Rawleigh, while she raised her dim eyes towards the masterpieces before her, had no interest in their excellence, no curiosity touching the conversation by which her two companions were engrossed; and notwithstanding the look of intense admiration with which her movements were watched by the stranger, and the air of respect with which he seemed to listen for her most trivial observations, she could not fully realize her own intention of appearing cheerful and unembarrassed.

"Lady Rawleigh seems indisposed this morning?" inquired their Hampton acquaintance of Lord Calder, in a low voice.

"The fatigues and exposure of London dissipation," answered he, affecting the mere interest of common politeness in the subject, "seldom allow us the enjoyment of beholding beauty in the full measure of its mischief."

"And yet," said the stranger, with an air of very *uncommon* interest, "methinks the possessor of such a jewel might be excused for guarding it from harm,—whether physical or moral,—by very rigid guardianship. A woman so lovely in person and disposition, is too rare a treasure to be resigned to the risk—"

"Of taking cold on quitting a crowded ball-room," interrupted Lord Calder, willing for many reasons to curtail the unseasonable comments of Penruddock; and he immediately turned away to examine a cartoon which Sir Thomas had just drawn from one of his valuable portfolios, in elucidation of some point in dispute between himself and his fair companions.

There was something in the sensibility felt or affected by the stranger in speaking of Lady Rawleigh, sadly discordant to his own feelings; and he began to think him a much less polished and agreeable man than he had done ten minutes before. What was the wife of Sir Brooke to *him*, that he should presume to discuss the merits of her character or the attractions of her person?—It was an unbecoming and presumptuous familiarity,—a remarkable proof of ill-breeding.—Such is usually the tenacity of the unprivileged and illegitimate adorer! The father, the brother, and the husband, are gratified by the homage rendered to the object of their hallowed affection; while the illicit lover regards every admirer as a rival,—every approving smile as intended to support pretensions as groundless and condemnable as his own.

It was probably this change of feeling towards his unknown companion, which now induced Lord Calder to mark by his apologies to their accomplished host for their intrusion on his valuable time, that he considered their visit

to have exceeded its privilege of extent; and Frederica, delighted at the prospect of release, and scarcely conscious whether they had been inspecting a cabinet of natural history, or a gallery of pictures, hastened to take a courteous leave of the party. It was evidently the intention both of the stranger and of Lord Calder to attend her to her carriage; but while the former by his more active agility contrived to keep pace with her animated movements, his lordship lost in a fruitless attempt, the occasion he had premeditated of inquiring from Sir Thomas Lawrence the name of his unexpected rival. Nor had Mrs. Erskyne been more active on this head; from the moment she discovered that Frederica and not herself was the object of the stranger's assiduities, she became perfectly indifferent whether he should prove the Cham of Tartary or Dr. Francia; even had she been more interested in the mystery, she could with difficulty have withdrawn her attention from the unceasing flow of graceful and lively conversation with which the president

devoted himself to the entertainment of visitors approaching him under the introduction of Lord Calder.

But tedious as had been to Lady Rawleigh the task of dissimulation among her fashionable friends, importunate as the giddy whirl and animation of the crowded streets appeared on her return homewards, a far more serious trial awaited her equanimity on her arrival.

It was Saturday,—ex-official Saturday;

When Houses pause that Senators may dine ;

and Sir Brooke, to whom a peremptory occupation was so novel a restraint, had determined to taste the first fruits of his holiday in company with a jovial crew to enhance the sweets of liberty. In the course of the morning he had invited Lord Launceston, Sir Robert Morse, Mr. Fieldham, Colonel Rhyse, and Sir Mark Milman to dine with him in Bruton-street; and Frederica, with all her oppression of spirit and struggling tears, now found herself required to play the courteous hostess, at the

forfeiture of being taxed with churlishness towards her husband's guests. She might quit them early indeed on pretext of the Opera ; and even that alternative presented a miserable prospect to her aching head and heart. But what else remained to be done ?—If she decided on finishing the evening with Mrs. Derenzy, she knew she must endure fifteen editions of the unwelcome narrative of Rawleigh's infidelity ;—if she determined on visiting her mother, she must be humiliated by contact with the partner of his guilt.

Nor with all her self-governance and all her exertions, could she succeed in disguising her indisposition from the scrutiny of her visitors. She was loaded with importunate sympathy, sickened with the suggestion of nostrums ; and so much was said to her touching the horrors of her aspect, in the tedious half-hour preceeding the announcement of dinner, that could she have banished from her thoughts her fatal visit to Queen-Anne-street, she might have been tempted to apprehend fatal effects from

her chain of connexion through Lady Olivia Tadcaster with the infected cabin of Captain Mopsley of the Scarmouth Castle!

"So you have been at Lawrence's this morning?" inquired Lord Launceston of his sister, soon after they were seated at table.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Rawleigh. "You never told me of that visit, Frederica;—are you going to sit for another picture?"

"Not at present," said Lady Rawleigh, drily. "But how did *you* hear of it, William?—have you seen Louisa Erskyne?"

"No!—the birds of the air brought it to my chamber;—and even informed me that you were especially attended on the occasion by a mysterious gentleman in black, whom Mrs. Erskyne believes to be Satan, and whom Lord Calder supposes to be the author of Junius."

"And who *is* decidedly the most agreeable man I ever met," said Lady Rawleigh.

Every one at table was now clamorous to inquire the name of the lucky mortal meriting such an encomium; and Sir Brooke became still more anxious, when he discovered that the

stranger was no other than the Hampton knight. But to the general demand Frederica could only reply in her former words, that he was the most agreeable person with whom she had ever been in company.

"I fancy your friends Lord Calder and Mrs. Erskyne are somewhat more fastidious," said Launceston with a sneer.

"No! they are even more enthusiastic in his favour than myself."

"And you do not even know the name of this dangerous divinity?" asked Sir Robert Morse.

"I have very little doubt," said Colonel Rhyse, with a demure smile, "that Lady Rawleigh's friend is Squire Rabisnab, the great Yankee carkilator, who I guess is now making a tour in England."

"Not if Lord Calder is any judge of high breeding;—*he* considers the stranger one of the most polished men in London."

"Rabisnab is rather famous for his address," said Lord Launceston tauntingly, and trying to uphold his friend's opinion.

"Is your hero a tall dark man, with very white teeth, Lady Rawleigh?" inquired young Fieldham, who was on terms of less facetious familiarity than the rest of the party.

"Precisely!—perhaps you are acquainted with him?"—said Frederica eagerly, while Sir Brooke suspended his operations on the saddle of mutton to listen to the reply.

"It *must* be the new Lord Vardington;—he has been living on the continent ever since the peace of Amiens, being a Roman Catholic, and all that kind of thing; and now his cousin having broken his neck, he is come into twenty thousand a-year and an Irish viscounty and all that kind of thing, and intends to renounce his foreign connexions."

"Very strange!" said Sir Robert Morse. "A man of his rank living in emigration all the best years of his life.—Very mysterious!"

"Perhaps he is a Jesuit," observed Colonel Rhyse.

"Now my dear Rhyse,—now my good friend Morse," pleaded Sir Mark Milman, who had not hitherto taken his eyes off his fish, "what

on earth can it signify to either of you who or what this unlucky man may happen to be?—If Lady Rawleigh has met with Lord Vardington, and is captivated by his agreeable conversation (Rawleigh, I'll trouble you for some mutton,) why should you insinuate a disparaging opinion touching his habits or character? Do leave people to themselves; and not amuse yourself with placing them against their will in a magic lantern, to be danced up and down like the devil and the baker, for the idle diversion of your own leisure."

"My dear Frederica, you see Mrs. Erskyne was right!" said Launceston provokingly. "Sir Mark Milman assures us that your gentleman in black was, after all, neither more nor less than the devil."

"I said no such thing!" cried Sir Mark, with his mouth full of salad.

"At what hour on Tuesday are we to find our way to Lady Olivia Tadcaster's?" asked Sir Robert Morse of Lady Rawleigh, in order to change the conversation.

"Frederica sleeps there on Monday night,"

answered Sir Brooke, with a similar intention. "Lady Olivia will not allow *her* to escape even the overture."

"No!" said Lady Rawleigh, attempting to assume an air of nonchalance. "I have altered my mind;—I cannot determine myself to lose three days of London in the height of the season for this stupid fête. I have sent my excuses by to-day's post."

"Indeed!" cried her astonished husband. "Your resolution has been very suddenly taken. At breakfast you seemed to anticipate much amusement from the project."

"I fear, my dearest Fred," cried Lord Launceston, setting down his untasted glass of champagne, "I very much fear you have been bewitched by the gentleman in black."

"It is very unkind to Lady Olivia to announce your intention of absenting yourself," said Mr. Fieldham; "you will spoil her party."

"I trust Lady Rawleigh will change her intention," observed Sir Brooke, with some solemnity.

"No, indeed!" said Frederica, with a heightened complexion. "My mind is quite made up not to go into Essex."

"Then you will disoblige your aunt as well as me."

"Do you submit to threats, Lady Rawleigh?" exclaimed Colonel Rhyse, laughing. "Sir Brooke I was going to ask to take wine with you;—but you look so grave that all my conviviality is at fault."

"Nay!" said Rawleigh, vexed that this conjugal difference of opinion should have occurred in presence of so many witnesses, "my grave looks are an additional argument in favour of more champagne. Launceston, Morse, pray join us."

But in spite of his attempts to be sociable, he could not completely recover himself while Frederica remained at table. To hear her pronounce so strange and resolute a determination, appeared to him the most inexplicable thing in the world. Lady Olivia Tadcaster's entertainment, although in reality devised to obliterate the recollection of her Czartopolozkna

misfortunes, was ostensibly given in honour of Lady Rawleigh ; who had appeared to enjoy the prospect of a fête where all her family and friends would be assembled, and in the arrangements of which her taste had been materially consulted. Was Lord Launceston's random supposition just?—Had the attractions of her new friend sufficed to determine her stay in town ;—or could she not, for three short days, absent herself from the adulation of Lord Calder ?

As he heard the carriage drive from the door which conveyed his wife to the Opera, where he feared she would be gratified with the presence of one or both her favourites, poor Sir Brooke had very little spirit to recommend his claret, or enter into the lively conversation of Rhyse and his brother-in-law ; and while Lady Rawleigh was informing Mrs. Erskyne with an air of affected interest that she had discovered their Hampton friend to be no other than Lord Vardington, a newly inheriting Roman Catholic Viscount,—her lord and master was tranquillizing his apprehensions by a secret

vow that to Essex she should positively go, if his own authority and the influence of her mother and brother were worthy of consideration.

CHAPTER VI.

Yet even her carriage is as far from coyness
As from immodesty :—in play, in dancing,
In suffering courtship, in requiting kindness,
In use of places, hours, and companies,
Free as the sun, and nothing more corrupted,

CHAPMAN.

NOTWITHSTANDING Lady Rawleigh's disinclination to breathe in the same room with Miss Elbany, she did not suffer herself to be detained from her accustomed visit to Lady Launceston after church on the following day; and having seated herself on her footstool beside her mother's sofa, who fancied she had been very busy reading one of Sherlock's sermons, and marked down the page as diligently as if she had really given her mind to the contents,

Frederica forgot for a moment those uneasy feelings which were subdued by her recent act of devotion and present tenderness of enjoyment. The Companion was occupied in her own apartment; and for a wonder, Lady Launceston expressed no anxiety touching her absence.

After the news of the day, and an addition of two grains of soda instigated by Dr. Camomile in her ladyship's draughts had been gravely discussed, she suddenly exclaimed, "I grieve, my dear Frederica, to learn from your brother that you have possessed yourself with a whim to disappoint poor Olivia of your company on Tuesday next."

"I really do not feel equal to the exertion of the thing;—I was never aware till lately of the exhaustion and weariness arising from dissipation."

"My dear, you should see Dr. Camomile."

"No!—I intend to give myself the relaxation of a week's idleness,—a much better cure."

"But cannot you postpone it till after my sister's party? She will take it as a serious

offence; and I must own, my dear Fred., that *my* feelings will be hurt by your indifference to her wishes."

"Nay, my dear mamma, if *you* make a point of my going to Ash Bank, I will not hesitate to recal my apologies."

"You see, love, Sir Brooke has been with me this morning to beg my interference. He will not hear of your staying away."

"Oh! Sir Brooke has been prompting you to influence me on the subject?" exclaimed poor Frederica,—the quilled ruff of her chemisette vibrating with emotion. "Then I certainly will *not* go."

Lady Launceston was quite amazed by the unusual tone of obstinacy assumed by her daughter. "My dear Fred., you forget yourself," said she smiling; "you cannot wish to displease your husband for such a trifle?"

"Certainly not,—certainly not!—It is a *mere* trifle that Rawleigh should exert his tyranny to get me out of the way, in order that he may follow his own disreputable pursuits

during my absence," said poor Frederica, vexed beyond her self-possession.

"What *are* you talking about," cried her mother, more startled than if her salts' bottle had broken in her hand. "Rawleigh a tyrant! Rawleigh guilty of a bad action!—My dear Frederica, I do not know you this morning."

"I wish I did not know myself!" cried her daughter, bursting into tears, "for I see nothing but misery awaiting me on every side."

"Fie! child—fie!—prosperous and fortunate as you are, it is tempting Providence to talk in this way. From the hour of your birth till now, my Frederica, you have never known misfortune; and your prospects are as bright as affection and affluence can make them. Thank God for them, my own dear girl,—as I do!—Go home, and submit yourself to your husband's opinion; and do not, for a little irritation of temper, hazard an ungrateful feeling to heaven, or an ungracious action towards a man who adores you."

When poor sleepy Lady Launceston roused

herself on any grand family emergency to give utterance to her opinions, it was remarkable by how much good sense and good feeling they seemed to be influenced. It was not, however, surprising to Frederica, who knew the excellence and integrity of her mother's principles; and who revered them the more that they were never brought forward for display, on trivial occasions. She was at all times touched by the sound of her mother's voice, when employed in a tone of admonition or reproach; and in the present instance, although her [tears were deprived of much of their petulant bitterness, they still flowed for having merited Lady Launceston's reproof.

"If you *desire* me, dear mamma; to go down to Ash Bank," said she at length, "I have never yet disobeyed you,—and I never will; but I shall fulfil my duty with an aching heart. Tell me, however, one thing;—has Miss Elbany received an invitation,—and will you resign her company and allow her to accept it?"

"Ah! my sweet love,—now indeed you are becoming rational,—*now* I recognise my own

Frederica;—you feel that Lucy's society on the occasion would make even the Ash Bank fête delightful, and you do her no more than justice."

"But will you permit her to join the party?" persisted Lady Rawleigh, surprised but satisfied that her mother should so completely misinterpret her feelings.

"I wish it were in my power to oblige you. But Lucy was expressing last night her very decided resolution to excuse herself, as she is just now sitting for a miniature to ornament my dressing-room."

"You yield to *her* objections then, while you consider my inclinations concerning this tiresome party as of no importance!" said Frederica, mortified by the intelligence that the little portrait of herself, which had been recently finished, would find in its destination so unwelcome a companion.

"My dear,—the cases are wholly different!—my poor humble Lucy will not be missed from the gay throng, which you well know is to be collected in *your* honour. Besides, your

husband insists on your going, and you have no right to disoblige him."

"Does he insist?"

"He will not hear of an excuse."

"Then," said Frederica, rising from her stool with an air of offended dignity, which only too well became the beauty of her person, "I will not venture to disappoint him. Let Rawleigh enjoy his triumph—it will not do him half so much honour as *my* submission."

And having kissed and taken leave of her mother, she quitted the house; but not without whispering to herself as she passed the threshold; that had she been aware of half the wickedness concentrated within the heart of man,—half the afflictions included in the chequered fortunes of the marriage state, she would never have resigned either the solace of her mother's affection, or the uneventful tranquillity of her mother's dwelling, to the usurpation of a Miss Lucy Elbany.

On her return home she found Mr. Lexley seated with her husband on the drawing-room sofa,—beating time on its damask cushions to

the measured periods of political eloquence with which he was stultifying the faculties of Sir Brooke previous to a regular attack on his vote,—as assassins commence their operations with narcotics ere they venture on the stiletto : while her brother, in expectation of her return, was amusing himself with making pen-and-ink sketches of coaches and four in her blotting-book. All three rose on her entrance ; and Sir Brooke sily directed a scrutinizing glance under her bonnet, to ascertain whether the atmosphere of St. George's church, and the arguments of the Dean of Carlisle, had effected any change in those stubborn feelings, in that levity of demeanour, which had sealed her lips on her return from the Opera the preceding night, but kept them in a ceaseless exercise of repartee and mirth during the whole of the ballet. On this point she did not seem inclined to prolong his suspense ; for before Mr. Lexley could again possess himself of the button and the ear of his intended victim—before she had even accepted the chair rolled forward for her by her brother, she observed, “ I find from mamma,

Sir Brooke, that she is anxious I should not disappoint Lady Olivia on Tuesday next;—I have therefore determined to revoke my excuse, and go down to Ash Bank to-morrow according to my original intention.”

“I am delighted to hear it,—you have decided very properly!” burst from her brother and husband at the same moment.

“Perhaps I might be able to get away myself for a few hours?” hesitated Sir Brooke,—with an inquiring look towards Mr. Lexley.

“My dear Sir!—you do not think of such a thing,—the great Distillery Bill!—”

“Oh! very true!—Lady Rawleigh can do very well without me;—and I shall therefore be glad of a plea for staying away.”

“Perhaps, as you will not be able to use Mameluke for two or three days to come, you would not object to lend him to Miss Elbany during your absence? I have obtained my mother’s acquiescence to the plan,” said her brother, continuing his sketches.

“Arrange it all among you,—I have no wishes, no opinions, no objections; and if I

had, Heaven knows they would be little regarded," said Frederica, throwing herself listlessly in her chair, as she thought of the companion lounging on her favourite Mameluke among the green lanes at Willesden,—with Launceston's sweet looks on one side, and Raleigh's sweet words on the other,—while she was pining away her hours at Lady Olivia's villa.

"Then *you* have no scruple in disappointing Lady Olivia:—you have made up your mind not to go to Ash Bank?" she whispered to her brother.

"My dear Fred., I never distress myself by making up my mind. There are only three things to which the term 'making up' is ever applied by human creatures; their minds,—their accounts,—and their medicines;—three nauseous operations and quite out of my way."

"But you do not intend to join my aunt's party?"

"Certainly not!—I detest the labour of villa entertainments; more particularly where I must play the Janus part of guest and host at the same time. I oblige Lady Olivia Tadcaster

very materially by leaving the arrangement of my affairs in her hands, and may therefore exonerate myself from the perils of her truffled turkies stuffed with Indian rubber, and her maraschino flavoured with prussic acid. Besides, she has thought proper to invite the Waddlestones, who will doubtless think proper to accept the invitation. All Spitalfields is already in a ferment with Mrs. W.'s preparations."

"But surely if you love Leonora well enough to devote your future life to her society, you will not avoid her presence at a private *dinner*?"

"Quite a different affair!—In transplanting Leonora to Marston Park, I shall take care to leave behind all the weeds with which my rose unique is surrounded; but I have no nerve to exhibit myself to such people as your Lady Blanche Thorntons and your Lady Barbara Dynleys, in contact with a Mrs. Waddlestone, or a Mrs. Luttrell, or any other Hottentot of the tribe. I have not yet made my proposals; and

am not at present called upon to subject myself to such a humiliation."

"Not made your proposals?—Surely then you are trifling unjustifiably with Leonora's affections?"—

"Leonora and I understand each other."—

"Only because she does not see you, as I do, listening with entranced attention to the music or the conversation of mamma's companion; sitting in that dull dressing-room, evening after evening, with no better amusement than winding silk, or copying mazurkas for Miss Lucy Elbany!"

"Don't talk of it,—Frederica, don't talk of it. It is too sweet a delusion to last; let me enjoy my dream before it vanishes. But, by the way, I find my friend Mrs. Waddlestone has actually invited you to dinner, and—"

"That I have unhesitatingly declined her invitation."

"You have done right!—It was a specimen of presumption worthy of herself, and arranged without the knowledge of her husband and

daughter; who,—thank heaven,—very little resemble herself. *She*, you know, was born a Waddlestone and belonging to the firm; and being as wilful as heiresses generally are, insisted on marrying a clever young lawyer without a shilling and of tolerably good connexions, on whom her father eventually bestowed his daughter, his euphonious patronymic, and five hundred thousand pounds. I often think the soapboiler-regnant's motive for marrying his daughter to a Lord, is to escape the perpetuation of the Waddlestone part of the business;—for the name is entailed with the Bank-stock!"

"What a set!"

"You are quite right not to entangle yourself with such people. What would the French Ambassadors and the Duchess of Whitehaven, and old Lady Wroxworth have said, had they met you at dinner at Waddlestone House; knowing how much the wife of a Warwickshire Baronet must be compromised by such a condescension."

Before Lady Rawleigh could reply to her brother's taunt, the door was thrown open, and

Mrs. Erskyne made her appearance, followed by Lady Huntingfield and Lady Margaret Fieldham, whose carriage had driven up at the same moment.

The object of the three ladies was pretty nearly the same,—to beg for Lady Rawleigh's interposition to procure invitations to Lady Olivia's breakfast; Lady Huntingfield for herself, her son and daughter, Mrs. William Erskyne for Lord Calder, Lady Rochester, Lady Blanche Thornton and Mr. Vaux. Frederica assented with readiness; nor was she sorry that her husband should be present to learn that his pertinacity in driving her out of town on this occasion, for the furtherance of his own amusements, was likely to procure her the society of a coterie so little to his taste as that of Lord Calder. "But alas!" thought Frederica, as she lent an unheeding ear to the tittle-tattle of Mrs. Erskyne; "I need not flatter myself that Rawleigh feels the slightest interest on the subject; —*that time is over!*"

There are few things more surprising or more diverting than the meanness exhibited in the

great world of London, to procure admittance to entertainments of any unusual promise; the falsehoods that are told,—the degradations that are courted—the paltry engines set in-motion to propitiate some friend's friend of the giver of the fête. Lady Olivia Tadcaster was a person universally avoided, as a tiresome, restless woman, bent on turning her friends and acquaintance to account;—a personal blemish in a fashionable circle; and one of those solitary sparrows who, being unconnected by close intimacies of her own, was sure to intrude herself between persons who had very little inclination for the interposition of a third presence. She belonged to nobody,—was a bore to every body;—and excepting when Lady A. or Lady B. had a place to find for a favourite servant, grown too troublesome to be kept in their own establishment,—or a tradesman to recommend whose failure must ensure the prompt payment of their own triennial bill, she was very rarely troubled by the visits or importunities of her fashionable acquaintance. Even when cards were first issued for the Ash Bank breakfast,

they had been received with coldness or contempt. "What *can* that foolish old woman mean by giving a fête!" cried Lady A. "Who in the world will travel twelve miles to look at her mountebanks' tricks?" exclaimed Lady B.;—and all the idle loungers of society, being satisfied that something better would present itself to afford them diversion on the appointed day, threw their cards of invitation into the fire, and dismissed Lady Olivia from their recollection.

But it happened to be one of those London seasons when agricultural distress, or the distress of the manufacturing classes, or some other national disaster which could not possibly produce a reaction on the pockets of the higher ranks for two years to come, was universally quoted as a motive for dismissing one out of three French cooks, and sending back Collinet and Musard to Paris, in ragged coats. Not a ball was to be heard of for love or credit; the select coteries expanded not a single inch in compassion to the general desolation; and even Almack's—so brilliant when relieved by the variety of other entertainments, became branded

with the fatal epithet of *toujours perdrix* when thus affording a sole and unchanging point of reunion. Mammæ who had a numerous progeny of angels in white satin to dispose of, grew distracted;—young gentlemen who had looked forward to the season to dance themselves into fashion and the dining-out line of business, sat desponding over their official desks, or retired to the re-perusal of their tailor's bills, in their monotonous lodgings;—it was all as dull as a rainy hay-time in a pastoral county!—

Under such circumstances, the Ash Bank entertainment soon rose to a premium; and a few days of fine weather having brought the fashionable world into a rural mood, it was admitted that Lady Olivia's shrubberies were as propitious to sweet sentiment as Kensington Gardens; and that, as her ladyship was a comestable person, not rendered fastidious by the frequency and routine of her entertainments, every body would go and take every body,—that is, every "every body" privileged by their own standing in the world to take liberties. There

seemed a probability that the despised Lady Olivia would assemble on this occasion all the select vestry of fashion, from whose meetings she was herself unanimously rejected.—But this is no unprecedented case!

Meanwhile Frederica, who had ceased to regard Lady Huntingfield as a well-meaning tiresome country-neighbour, and Lady Margaret as a pretty lack-a-daisical woman of four-and-thirty whose matrimonial disappointments had arrested her progress in life among the sickly affectations of sweet eighteen, and now beheld them only as the fatal witnesses of her husband's indiscretion, could not but notice the measured formality with which they thought it their duty to reply to Sir Brooke Rawleigh's friendly attentions. The scene of his tender adieu to Miss Elbany appeared so wholly unimportant to his own feelings, that he had entirely forgotten Lady Huntingfield's intrusion, and air of indignant consternation; nor could he at all account for the ungracious primness with which she now received his attempts to relieve Lady Rawleigh in the entertainment of

her numerous guests. But Frederica's memory was more tenacious,—her perception more acute; and ever and anon, in the midst of Louisa Erskyne's lively gossip with herself and Launceston, she cast a sidelong glance at the rectangularity of person and aridity of speech affected by the Fieldhams towards the knight of Rawleighford.

Mrs. Erskyne, in the interval, was exercising a similar degree of impertinence, although on very different grounds. She was not by nature a malicious woman. Like certain reptiles, her tips were venomous, and her intentions harmless; but she was so intensely and exclusively occupied with herself and her own pleasures, the business of her life was so completely that of amusing herself, that she would have estimated an earthquake, a hurricane, a revolution, or any other great national calamity, solely with reference to its influence on her personal vanities and diversions. She regarded the death of her relatives as an importunate occasion for wearing black, and depression of

spirits as a disease demanding the seclusion of the mourner from all danger of infecting the rational part of the community;—she was, in fact, a pretty little useless butterfly, born to flutter its wings in the sunshine, and to disappear unmarked and unlamented on the approach of winter. To such a woman, her exclusion from Lord Calder's coterie—the best thing of its kind in London,—had been a subject of secret but bitter mortification; and the recent reversion of her sentence, a matter of equal exultation. She was too worldly-wise, however, not to detect the motive which had proved her passport to the forbidden circle; and having very little faith in Lady Rawleigh's blindness or indifference to his lordship's adoration, was only apprehensive that Frederica would prove as discerning as herself,—and either oppose *her* progress,—or reveal its origin to the world. Her great object, therefore, was to prove to Lady Rawleigh her own importance and influence in the coterie at Calder House.

“Then you will write to Lady Olivia for

cards for Lady Rochester, Countess Rodenfels, and Lady Blanche?" said she, while the eyes of her desponding friend were wandering to the rigidity of Lady Huntingfield's person. "I would have asked your aunt myself, only I am tired to death with the exertions I have been using to persuade them all to go. You know how Calder hates a bore!—I have been obliged to promise him that Lady Olivia shall not bestow more than ten minutes per hour of her tediousness upon him, during his stay at Ash Bank."

"But why trouble themselves to solicit an invitation at all?" said Launceston; who, however prone to utter impertinences respecting his aunt, was less patient of hearing them from the lips of others. "If they feel so *undesirous* of going, we feel them very *undesirable* additions to the party."

"Solicit!—the idea of Lady Rochester's soliciting the honour of Lady Olivia Tadcaster's acquaintance!"

"I have known her solicit—aye, and he refused the entrée to houses of less respectability, and of very little importance. When a

woman like Lady Rochester is to be saved from sinking, she buoys herself up with cork and other light valueless substances."

Lady Rawleigh, vexed by her brother's bitterness, now turned the conversation by inquiring of Louisa whether Mr. Erskyne was satisfied with her miniature,—a transition which appeared likely to kindle dissensions in a new quarter; for the fair guest immediately turned round to Sir Brooke, who had been compelled by the dryness of the Huntingfields to resume his shop-colloquy with the button-holder.

"Oh! by-the-way," cried she, "I have undertaken, Sir Brooke, to procure your consent to a measure calculated for the advantage of the world in general. My picture is in the act of being engraved for the series of female portraits of the nobility, and I have ventured to promise that my friend Frederica's shall grace the following number."

Now this proposition was in fact as new to Lady Rawleigh as to any person present; but the blush of surprise was mistaken by her hus-

band for the expression of her confederacy in the business; and he no longer doubted that the picture which originally moved his jealousy, ere he learnt its destination as a present to Lady Launceston, had been in fact projected with a view to this dangerous multiplication.

"I am sorry to disappoint you, and the rest of Lady Rawleigh's *friends*," said he, with considerable emphasis on the word, "but I entertain the old-fashioned prejudice of wishing to retain the resemblance of my wife sacred from the comments of the crowd round a printseller's shop. Had I married an actress, I must have submitted to such a degrading publicity;—but, as it is—you must excuse me."

"That I will, with pleasure," cried Louisa, rising hastily to take leave; "for I shall thus escape all invidious comparisons between her face and my own;—but with *your* opinions and principles, I wonder you ever allow her to overstep the avenue at Rawleighford. Good bye, Fred.;—I need not ask you whether I shall see you in the 'degrading publicity' of the park or gardens?"

"Why not?—I shall certainly take a turn there late in the day," answered Lady Rawleigh, who had never ventured in these resorts on a Sunday in her life; but who was apprehensive her friend would proclaim her a poor, meek-spirited, tyrannized wife, unless she exerted a little unnatural show of independence. "Till then, good bye!—I will send you the tickets to-morrow."

"Mrs. Erskyne has charming spirits," said Lady Huntingfield, when she had quitted the room.

"Quite a little sparkling gem!" said Lady Margaret, languidly; and Frederica, who was aware of their detestation of the caustic Louisa, readily perceived that these commendations were intended as an offence to Sir Brooke, whose demeanour towards her had been so little gracious.

"A gem I should be sorry to wear!" cried Lord Launceston. "I should expect it would occasionally remind me of its possession by a severe prick,—like Prince Chéri's ring."

"Prince Chéri's ring," said Lady Hunting-

field, assuming a solemn air and tone, "was only metaphorical of conscience; a moral sensibility which appears lost to modern times."

But the innuendo was equally lost on poor Sir Brooke; who was now once more enveloped in all the fogs and mists of the Report of some recent Committee. Even the departure of his guests, of Lord Launceston, of Lady Rawleigh herself, failed to divert the even tenour of Lexley's prose,—the patient gravity of his victim's attitude of audience.

CHAPTER VII.

They amble—they lisp—they nickname God's creatures.

HAMLET.

THE villa inhabited by the widow of Lord Derenzy at Twickenham, was precisely such a one as might have sheltered the mincing affectation of one of Congreve's heroines, or formed the shrine of a goddess hymned by D'Urfey, or lampooned by Lady Mary Wortley. —A blaze of Indian lacker,—a labyrinth of bonzes from the New Exchange, and enamel toys from the counters of Mrs. Chenevix,—specimens of *parfilage* presented as *étrennes* to the Lady Sophronia Mandeville, when her right honourable father performed the functions of Ambassador at the Court of Lewis XV.,—

morceaux of old Dresden, defying the emulation of Fogg or Baldock,—specimens of turquoise *Sèvres* exceeding the rivalry of Harewood House;—the atmosphere redolent of Maréchal,—even the silken lap-dog on its velvet cushion—bespoke the daintiness of the last century! Sachets, pot-pourri, and dragon china, were showered in every interstice of the room.

In this uneasy temple of fragile luxury,—a temple erected not by the genuine fairies of Titania's court but by the coxcombical elves of Count Hamilton's Tales, or the *Cabinet des Fées* who are so apt to shower down *pralines* instead of roses or dimples,—looking out upon a lawn which resembled the sunny courtliness of one of Watteau's pictures, sat Lady Derenzy on the evening of the Ash Bank fête; with Lady Lavinia Lisle, Countess Ronthorst, Miss Harcourt, a superannuated maid of honour, and Mrs. Lucretia Wriothesley, a fragment of the ancient coterie of the Montagus and Yeseys.—Each held in her hand a coffee-cup, the size of an acorn and consistency of a can

eggshell, steaming with a hyacinthine fluid such as might have propitiated the forlorned ghost of Pope's Belinda. In the shrill chilliness of an early summer evening, they were busy with their coffee and waiting for their cassino and trédrille;—the vigour of scandal animating their ghastly antiquity into a degree of oracular vehemence worthy the weird woman of Endor!

At the head of the conclave was Lady Derenzy herself. But oh! how different the puckered visage beneath her frizzed and powdered toupée, from the graceful dignity of feature embellishing a portrait by Gainsborough suspended at one end of the room, and graced by the inscription of "Sophronia, Baroness Derenzy;" and still more, from the group in which, with her sisters-in-law Mrs. Martha and the late Lady Rawleigh—at that time blooming hoydens in their teens—she figured in an archery-piece from the animated pencil of Reynolds; in which the late Lord Derenzy was represented bow in hand and Garter on knee. In the one she appeared a

mythology in the other a queen; and it would be well for many a nymph and many a queen, to be startled by a personal contrast so appalling as that now palpably manifested between the fair and gracious Sophronia, and the stern, and withered, and repellent Lady Derenzy!

"Shall we have Mr. Broughley this evening?" simpered Lady Lavinia, Lisle to Miss Harcourt,—the only two of the party still able to deal without spectacles, and therefore regarded as two playful little creatures whose whisperings might be excused.

"Oh! no, my dear!—no chance of such a thing. Broughley is quite infatuated by that creature Olivia Tadcaster; you know he was ever a butterfly; and it must be owned that with all her flightiness she is very fascinating."

"Fascinating!" cried Lady Lavinia—"gaudy as a macaw,—and restless as a racoon."

"You severe thing!" retorted Miss Harcourt, tapping her on the arm, and looking horrifically arch. "You and Olivia were always rivals."

"No!" sighed Lady Lavinia, looking down.

pathetically on the funeral effigy of departed tenderness glittering on the index of her tragic volume; "I thank heaven I have been spared all those rough encounters which betide the hurricane of human passion. Let Lady Olivia possess herself of the heart of Broughley; she will meet with no obstacle from the coquetry of Lavinia Lisle,—whose widowed affections are in a better place;—but our friend has a soul,—dear Miss Harcourt,—our Broughley has a soul; and I trust I do not offend either the living or the dead, by honouring its high endowments with kindred intercommunion!"

"Vain creature, how ugly she looks!" thought the superannuated maid of honour, gazing on the fashionable wig of her rival; and very cordially would Traveller Broughley, who was at that moment buried with all his spiritual endowments in a chicken-pie at Ash Bank, have echoed the ejaculation. *He* had no taste for mummies, except at the Royal Society; no predilection for old women, unless in a fresco of the Destinies or the nurse

of Ulysses, fresh from the pickaxe at Herou-laneum.

"What was that you were saying about Mr. Broughley?" said Lady Derenzy, whose age and supremacy entitled her to ask impertinent questions. "What were those young people saying about our learned friend, my dear Countess?"

"Lady Lavinia was observing," said Countess Ronthorst, whose gray eyes had been looking the curiosity she could not gratify,—for she was as deaf as a woodcock,—“that this is the day of the grand gala at Ash Bank; and that our little coterie will therefore be deprived of the vivacity of Mr. Broughley, the conversibility of Lord George, and General Lorrison—”

"We can spare them,—we can spare any one so little refined in mind and feeling as to prefer a garish crowd to our little intellectual circle," cried Mrs. Lucretia Wriothesley, propelling her words through a very long nose which acted like a naval speaking-trumpet.

"I am very much mistaken if Lorrison ventures his lumbago on any such fool's errand!"

exclaimed Lady Derenzy, angrily. "I own I am astonished at Lady Olivia!—What would her excellent mother the late Lady Trevelyan have said, to see her giving into the absurdities of these giddy-pated times!—A fête champêtre!—well do I recollect the ridicule excited by the introduction of a species of entertainment so ill-suited to our pluviose clime!—That wild lad, my friend Burgoyne, wrote his 'Maid of the Oaks' as a satire on the thing."

"But the angelic Farren so stole upon our hearts in Lady Bab Lardoon, that we forgot the moral of the piece!" cried Mrs. Lucretia.

"Ah! my dear Lady Derenzy!" sighed Miss Harcourt, "shall I ever forget a charming day of pastoral happiness I passed with you at Strawberry Hill in the year seventy-nine! I was then a giddy creature in a bib; and well do I recollect—ay! it must have been in eighty—for well do I recollect that Madame du Defand's little dog, Tonton, was led forward by a pink ribbon as we were taking syllabub on the lawn, and that Horace turned aside as the little innocent creature wagged its tail on approaching

us;—and methought I saw a spot of moisture on his lilac lustring suit. (It might have been a tear,—it might have been rain,—it might have been syllabub.”

“Yes!” vociferated Mrs. Lucretia through her nasal tube, conveying her snuff-box as she spoke through a labyrinth of quilted petticoats into a bottomless pit of a pocket, “Tonton was a prodigious favourite; and Horace would stand no jesting on the subject of his octogenarian amour. Mrs. Vesey, who could speak plain when she liked, once said to him—bless my soul, I forget what it was she said, but Walpole took out his pencil,—people’s pencils were as ready as their wit in those days, and now nobody carries one but an exciseman,—and *scratch!*—*scratch!*—in his little yellow satin souvenir—”

“A stanza!” cried Miss Harcourt. “I was sure of it.”

“He was all sensibility!” said Lady Derenzy, looking as hard as if stuffed with patent iron shavings.

Mrs. Lucretia, who had been diving into the

same cavernous receptacle which received the tortoiseshell snuff-box, now produced a small morocco note-case, containing sundry bonmots, scraps, sketches, epigrams, and lampoons—the sybilline leaves of the wizard companions of her youth,—all of which have since found their way into various anas and periodicals; although many of the number which had been collected at Paris during her intimacy with the Geoffrins, and d'Epinays, and d'Houdetots, were marked with a red cross as being too strong for the English palate. “I think I can find it,” said she, affecting to turn over the leaves with an air of uncertainty, although they were worn to a diaphanous slightness by incessant reference; and although this little arsenal of squibs and crackers was as familiarly known to its proprietress as a breviary to a priest or a missal to la Reine Claude. “Ah! here it is!—‘To Estifania.’—ay! ay! the very thing.”

Lady Lavinia and Miss Harcourt, who affected the vivacity of youth, now hobbled from their seats, and hung over her with breathless attention. Countess Ronthorst put down her

coffee-cup, and drew a long breath as if preparatory to the act of attention; and Lady Derenzy, who loathed that scarlet depositary as ardently as ever Mirabeau hated the *Livre Rouge*, or Cobbett the English pension-list, and who had been compelled to listen to this little piece of Marivaudage not less than a thousand times, was obliged to affect an interest in the business. She had only one mode of retaliation at her disposal. She was in the confidence of a loose plank in the well-waxed floor, and had a method when her guests grew tedious, of jogging it with her foot till all the hands and heads of all the mandarins were set in motion; and every jar, and every beaker, and every tazza, joined in harmonious dissonance.

"To Estifania!"—chaunted Mrs. Lavinia, in defiance.

' Sweet fair ! whose lips too fiercely deal
The thunder of the skies,
Say must our shrinking bosoms feel
The lightning of thine eyes ?

(Lavinia, Lucretia, the maid of honour, and the

mandarins, wagged their heads in admiring cadence.)

Ah!—no the tender hand of love

Is gentle as the dove,—

Venus, the child of sovereign Jove

May not his rival prove."

"How sweet!" symphonized the quartette.

"May I come in?" said a little plaintive querulous voice at the half-open door; and on universal assent, a little slim spare outline of a man glided towards them on the point of his toes; a *chapeau-bras* beneath his arm; with his hair frizzed out à l'oiseau royal.

"Ah, General!" cried Miss Harcourt—"I knew *you* would not desert us."

"*Enfin après deux jours je te revois, Arbate!*" exclaimed Mrs. Lucretia, with great superfluity of emphasis; and the general exclamation of delight and welcome which arose on the entrance of the antiquated Lovelace, deepened into a shrill tumult of rapture, resembling a symphony of triangles, when General Lorrison's nephew—Lord George, the fashionable lyrist, followed him towards the sofa. With an air

resembling the unceasing friskiness of a calf trained into affectation by the labours of a dancing master, and a cream-coloured face which in assuming an air of sentiment became irresistibly comic, he glissaded towards them;—accepting a seat between the maid of honour and Lady Margaret with a smile such as would have proved the destruction of the *Précieuses Ridicules*, while the General devoted his urbanity to the lady of the house.

“We were apprehensive you had been seduced away to Ash Bank,” sighed Miss Harcourt, deploying her fan and looking the Ranelagh coquette, while her rival affected an ingenuous and Phyllis-like air.

“To Ath Bank!” lisped Lord George with a start of fastidious horror, “Am I in the habit of micthing in the indithcwiminate mobth of the fathionable world that you should taxth me with thuch a pwedilection?”

“I understand,” said Lady Margaret, “that Lord Calder, the Duchess of Whitehaven, Lady Osterley, Lady Newby, and all the most exclusive set of London will be there.”

"Far be it from me to impugn your Ladyship's authority, or to utter a syllable in disparagement of persons possessed of all the precedents which rank, opulence, and fashion can bestow; but pardon me, Lady Magawet, pardon me Mith Harcourt,—if without presuming on my own—"

"George!" exclaimed the General, instigated by an unusual flutter of spirit, which rendered him for the first time in his life so disregardful of etiquette as to interrupt a speaker having the ear of the house,—“what was the name of that very gentlemanly man who sat opposite me at dinner to-day, and whom Lady Wroxworth talked of bringing here this evening. Surely I am not mistaken in stating it to be Waddlestone?”

“Impossible!” shrieked every female present, “Lady Wroxworth has too much sense!” cried Lady Lavinia.

“Lady Wroxworth has too much feeling!” said Countess Ronthorst.

“Lady Wroxworth has too much principle!” ejaculated the maid of honour.

“Lady Wroxworth knows too well what is due to herself!” mouthed Mrs. Lucretia.

“Lady Wroxworth knows too well what is due to *me*!” said Lady Derenzy with majestic dignity; and rising from her seat, like Semiramis from her throne, she rang the bell, and addressed herself most imperially to the astonished butler, “Wathen! if Lady Wroxworth presents herself here to night, you will have the kindness to express to her Ladyship with the respectful deference due to all my accustomed guests, that *this* evening my circle is limited to my own privileged and familiar friends. You understand me!—tea and the card-tables!”—

“You understand me, tea and the card-tables!” ejaculated the astonished domestic as he traversed the vestibule. “The housekeeper may perhaps understand setting out tea, and John or Thomas the quadrille table;—but if any born mortal can understand my Lady when she gets into her tantrums, he never stood in Jeremiah Wathen’s shoes.”

But the amazement depicted on the rotund visage of the well-powdered butler, was trifling

in comparison with that of General Lorrison and his fair devotees. He had often compared the majestic Sophronia with Catherine of the North, and himself to the Prince de Ligne; but he now trembled beneath the grandeur of her ire. Not so the female majority of the circle; they prepared themselves for the unusual recreation of a scene, and were delighted. The General was a charming creature refined even to spiritualization, but they knew all his little pastoral gallantries by heart; Lord George was a "man of wit and fashion about town," but his club *sobriquet* of "curds and whey," was only too characteristic of the sickly monotony of his discourse. A fight,—a war of words between Lady Derenzy and Lady Wroxworth,—was quite a new feature in the annals of the Twickenham coterie; and never did Roman emperor sicken with such impatience for the sanguinary struggle of the Amphitheatre, as did the spirits of the four eager visitors, while they sat fidgetting with anxiety for the sound of coming wheels on the gravel,—the signal of combat. General Lorrison said not a word; the fact that

he had unwittingly dined in company with a soapboiler decomposed and vitiated the thin current of his blood; while Lord George, who perceived that something was sorely amiss, looked pensively interrogative and waited the event.

At length a fatal sound became audible in the distance; and when the rotatorial rumble acquired the grittiness of near approach, Countess Ronthorst nodded significantly to Mrs. Lucretia, and Lady Lavinia depressed the corner of her lip towards the maid of honour on whose cap the wiry flowers quivered with excitement. Lady Derenzy, meanwhile, affecting an air of magnanimous self-possession, distributed her measured prose to their ablistening ears, like a college-tutor in a lecture-room.

There was a momentary pause!—Again the trituration of the gravel spoke gratingly of the departing chariot; and the hissing of restored respiration in Lady Derenzy's drawing-room accompanied the sound. But in another minute the door was thrown open by Wathen,

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and Lady Wroxworth—*alone*—in her accustomed gray satin gown and high-plaited cap,—toddled into the room.—What a disappointment!

“Good evening, my dear Sophronia,” said the kind-hearted old lady, wholly unsuspecting of the storm which had been preparing to explode.

“I thought I *knew* my friend!” observed Lady Derenzy, theatrically offering her hand;—and every eye was now reproachfully turned on the poor little general.

“I was satisfied there was some misunderstanding,” said Lady Lavinia.

“I never conceived it possible,” cried Mrs. Lucretia.

“I guessed it would prove a false alarm!” whispered the maid of Honour.

“Lady Wroxworth!” said the perplexed Lorraston, waving his hand in suppression of their murmurs, “Satisfy the doubts of these ladies, and my own embarrassment, by informing them whether you did not express an in-

tention of introducing to their society this evening a person with whom I had the honour of dining at Lord Wroxworth's table?"

"The individual in the velvet waithcoat," faltered Lord George.

"Mr. Waddlestone?" inquired Lady Wroxworth, in the calmest tone, and plainest English, while a faint shriek burst from the clay-coloured lips of Lady Lavinia. "Yes! indeed, my dear Sophronia, I was almost in hopes of procuring you the pleasure of my friend Mr. Waddlestone's company; but he is so much in request, and had been so long engaged to the Duchess of Whitehaven, that I was obliged to give up the point. I could not prevail on him for even half an hour. From something he said, I fancy he had heard our little coterie reviled as a *bureau d'esprit*; or had been tired to death at Lady Olivia's with the fatigue of Princess Guéménées eternal chatter. The ambassador brought Mr. Waddlestone back with him, that he might be in time for our dinner; but the Princess assured me Lord Calder and Lady Rawleigh could scarcely be

tempted to give him up. Lord Wroxworth however would never have forgiven him had he disappointed us."

Can thutch thingth be, and overcome uth like a thummer cloud,
Without our thpethial wonderment!

lispd the lyrical lord.—But Lady Derenzy had been preparing a speech.

"It is now some years," said she, "since the independence of America, and the influence exerted in this country by the return of a large body of enlightened men habituated to the demoralizing spectacle of an equalization of rank, was supposed to exert a pernicious influence on the minds of the secondary and inferior classes of Great Britain. At that critical moment I whispered to my husband, 'Derenzy! be true to yourself and the world will be true to you. Let the aristocracy of Great Britain unite in support of the Order,—and it will maintain its ground against the universe!' Lord Derenzy took my advice, and the country was saved!

"Again, when the assemblage of the States

General of France,—the fatal tocsin of the Revolution,—spread consternation and horror throughout the higher ranks of every European country, and the very name of the guillotine operated like a spell on the British peerage, I whispered to my husband, ‘Derenzy! be true to yourself, and the world will be true to you. Let the aristocracy of Great Britain unite in support of the Order,—and it will maintain its ground against the universe!’—Again Lord Derenzy took my advice, and again the country was saved!

“A terrible period is now approaching;—a day of encroachment on our privileges,—of abrogation of our rights! My husband is no more,—and it may be that the Oracle of Dodona has lost its charm;—but to you, my tried friends and familiar associates, I consider it my duty to repeat the warning. ‘Be true to yourselves and the world will be true to you. Let the aristocracy of Great Britain unite in support of the Order,—and it will maintain its ground against the universe!’” And as she terminated her harangue, Lady Derenzy emphatically

jarred her coffee-cup on the table, which added a solemnity to the scene like the falling hat of Corporal Trim. The descent of the cup was as if a heavy lump of clay had been kneaded in its concavity!—

“How inecthpwethibly gwand!” said the cream-coloured poet.

“How sublime!” cried the general.

“How beautiful!” sighed the ladies.

“Poor thing!” thought Lady Wroxworth, who never dreamed of connecting this tirade with her purposed introduction of a man so polished, so enlightened, so pleasing, and so popular as her friend the soapboiler to her friend Sophronia. “She certainly is flighty at times. I am glad I did not persuade Waddestone to come to-night. He would have been sadly bored with all these rhapsodies.”

“And who had your lively favourite Princess Guéménée to amuse her at Ash Bank?” inquired Lady Lavinia Lisle.

“Every body, I fancy,” said Lady Wroxworth good-humouredly. “But her own party consisted of Count and Countess Rodenfels,

Lady Rochester and Mr. Vaux,—‘swan and shadow’ you know;—my little niece Louisa, flirting with Lord Putney,—and Sophronia’s little niece Lady Rawleigh, flirting with Lord Calder.”

“Thank Heaven!” piously ejaculated Lady Derenzy. “I rejoice that my nephew’s wife is restored to some sense of propriety; I was apprehensive of hearing her name connected with that of the repugnant individual already so obnoxious to my feelings.”

“What a thtwong mind!” said Lord George suppressing a yawn; while the domestics, to the infinite relief of the party, proceeded to arrange the card-tables; and the accustomed little gallantries commenced between the general and the rest of the old women concerning partners, and seats, and cutting in, and cutting out. His compliments to the withered anatomies who courted his spectral smiles, were as smooth and flowery as the brocaded waistcoat of his great grandsire.

CHAPTER VII.

Like as the culver on the bared bough
 Sits mourning for the absence of her mate,
 And in her songs sends many a wishful vow
 For his return that seems to linger late;
 So I alone, now left disconsolate
 Mourn to myself the absence of my love,
 And wandering here and there, all desolate,
 Seek with my plaints to match that mournful dove.

SPENSER.

BUT the storms of that brightest of summer days had not been confined to the antique coterie of Twickenham,—that entomological museum preserved in amber for the speculations of the curious in human nature. Lightnings had flashed in the verdant solitudes of Ash Bank,—and Tartarean thunders reverberated through the atmosphere of Essex!

But lest those who are apt to connect the idea of that vaccine county with the ague and the webbed foot should be inclined to depreciate the beauties of Lady Olivia Tadcaster's villa, it may be necessary to premise that Ash Bank was contiguous to one of the wildest solitudes of that ancient forest, which—however defiled by its association with the Lord Mayor's Hunt—presents some of the most exquisite specimens of woodland scenery to be found in England. Diverging from the Epping-road through thickets of weeping birch and copse-wood, the London guests found themselves refreshed with a simplicity of universal verdure, more cheering to the eye than the flowery parterre or clustering bloom of the finest shrubbery.

It was in gliding through the tranquil coolness of this verdant solitude, that Mr. Vaux, who occupied the second seat in Lord Calder's travelling-carriage, suddenly inquired,—"after the weariness of a long political discussion which had extended beyond four milestones,—"

“And what do you intend to do with Lady Rawleigh?”

“Whatever she pleases;—but why do you ask?”

“Because she takes us both so much out of our way this morning.”

“You are not, surely, a pretendant on the list?”

“Heaven forbid!—I have no predilection for naïveté;—you know you never could tempt me to admire the *nature* of Gainsborough’s pigs.”

“Two of us are sophisticated, as Lear’s fool observes.”

“Whatever *she* pleases!” recapitulated Mr. Vaux. “That has not been usually your measure of action under similar circumstances.”

“I never was *in* similar circumstances;—I never found myself irrevocably captivated by the graces of a beautiful woman in love with her husband,—and in favour with God and man.”

“Allow me to match your courteous allusion to Lear’s motley by thanking the Gods, with

Andrey, that they have not made me poetical!"

"I wish there were less prose in the case!—I never saw any thing more determinately matter of fact than the domestic happiness of these Rawleighs."

"I never saw *you* so desperately in love since you left Eton.—You are as blind as Cupid himself!—Recollect that little story I quoted to you last night after Lady Margaret Fieldham's authority."

"Some idle scandal of old Huntingfield's."

"And recollect Sir Robert Morse's history of Rawleigh's jealousy about the attendance of your mysterious friend at Lawrence's gallery."

"One of Morse's thick-headed misconceptions."

"And yet—scandal or no scandal—methinks if I had such propitious tools to work with as a jealous husband and an injured wife, I would advance more with my suit than you have done with yours."—

It might be that Lord Calder was unwilling to expose his *plan de campagne*; for instead of

replying to this taunt, he began to point out the sylvan beauty of the broomy knolls and fern-crested thickets through which they were passing; and in another minute they reached the Swiss cottage which served as a lodge to the villa.

Lord Calder, in seeking, and persuading his sister to seek, an invitation to the fête champêtre of such a person as Lady Olivia Tadcaster, had acted with the full anticipation of its tediousness before his eyes; and regarded the sacrifice as one fully worthy to be offered on the shrine of his new goddess. From season to season in the course of his fashionable existence, he had witnessed the failure of fifty similar projects; had seen the most lavish cost, the most fanciful preparations expended to produce nothing but fatigue, exhaustion, and repentance; and he satisfied himself from the restless and wonder-seeking tone of the lady of Ash Bank, that every previous blunder honoured by his presence would be exceeded on the present occasion! But poor Lady Olivia, discomfited by her recent misadventure con-

cerning her Bohemian protégés, had for once submitted her own opinion to that of her niece; and however prone to interfere in the direction of other people's affairs, had delegated her own to the guidance of Frederica.

Now Lady Rawleigh, at all times inclined by her natural predilections in favour of simplicity, felt herself at the passing moment so incapable of exertion, so preoccupied in heart and soul, so averse from elaborate displays, that she persuaded the anxious hostess to forego the beaten track of charades and tableaux, minstrels and jugglers and Dutch fairs, and confide the cause of her breakfast to the hands of Nature.

"Your visitors, my dear aunt," said Frederica, "are persons tired out by the monotony of these things, which are only endurable amid the snows and tedium of a Christmas party. They are weary of the heat and glare and dust of London; and as probably none of the multitude have condescended to look at their own majestic parks and beautiful gardens enamelled by the richness of June, for the last twenty

years, give them a tantalizing specimen of all they renounce in the charms of Ash Bank. Give them the country in all its purity."—

"And do nothing at all for their entertainment?—My dear, they will be bored to death;—order their carriages, and go back to town."

"Their horses will require rest; and they will be glad enough to amuse themselves with your charming gardens, and with those grass terraces which render the home-view from Ash Bank so beautiful. Let walks be mown and rolled through the plantations; and, depend on it you will find the spring foliage, and the wild flowers, and the untamed aviary of this lonely spot, far more attractive than the artificial garlands and variegated lamps of a regular breakfast-giver."

"At least I will have down Jarrin, and give them something to talk about in the originality of the breakfast;—and it shall all be disposed in Turkish marquees."

"I recommend you to have down two or three first-rate cooks from Ude's academy; and let your dinner be served in the banqueting-

room. People will be tired with walking about, and disposed for more substantial fare than jellies and caramels."

"Well then, I will have all the girls from the neighbouring villages dressed in a picturesque costume, to wait at table."

"Far better satisfy yourself with your own domestics, in their usual dress, and the persons usually provided who understand their duty."

"My dear, it shall all be as you please," said her ladyship, her parsimony prompting her to escape on such easy terms; and when Lady Rawleigh arrived on the preceding evening, she was gratified to perceive that her advice had been strictly followed;—that Musard's band alone had been bespoken for the juvenile guests, and that preparations had been made for a very handsome dinner,—such as might have been eaten with quite as much propriety, but not half so much enjoyment, in Grosvenor or Berkeley-square, any day at eight o'clock.

On the first coup d'œil of the little park, presenting neither streamers nor tents nor pavilions, nor temporary decorations of any de-

scription, some of the younger guests it is true were inclined to be disappointed;—they felt that they should see quite enough of briary coppices, and verdant holmes, and shadowy plantations, on their return to Yorkshire, or Dorsetshire, or Kent, at the close of the season. But Nature is an unsilenceable monitress; and before an hour had elapsed, they were inclined to acknowledge that Lord Henry was far more agreeable in a walk on the smooth turf among the green glades of Ash Bank, than in a galoppe at Almack's; and that Lord Putney had never been so charming as when seated at their feet in a natural berceau of wild honeysuckles.

But if the blooming Lady Louisas and buoyant Lady Sophias were satisfied with this unexpected change of pleasures, the gratification of such persons as Lady Rochester and Lord Calder, was far more genuine. All the stage-trick of artificial life was so familiarly known to *them*,—the wooden trap-doors of the pantomime were so glaringly apparent to their experienced eyes,—that the transition to the naked truth of

unadorned nature was indeed refreshing. Lady Rochester forgot to examine into the delicate complexion of the wild roses festooning every hedgerow; and her brother, seated by Frederica's side in a bosquet of impervious evergreens looking out on the sunny landscape and the gay groups stationed on the various terraces, felt that he had not been so satisfactorily placed throughout the brilliant festivities of the season. Yet even there, he could not find himself close at the ear of Eve, without betraying the original impulse of the Satanic tempter.

"I perceive," said he, in his most silvery tones of blandishment, "that you have debarred Sir Brooke from the happiness of attending you this morning."

"You forget his parliamentary duties."

"Surely I have seen more than one member here to-day?"

"Oh, yes!—twenty;—but some Distillery Bill comes on to-day, in which Rawleigh's borough is particularly interested; and Mr. Lexley persuaded him it was his duty to be on the spot."

"And what did Lady Rawleigh persuade him?"

"To do exactly what suited him best; a certain mode of proving the efficaciousness of her advice."

"Quite right!—you are resolved to be adored beyond the limit of conjugal idolatry, and have chosen the only safe plan:—universal liberty of conscience,—universal freedom of action. If Sir Brooke Rawleigh preferred his dusty ride in Hyde-park, you were very wise not to compel him to the endurance of the dewy landscapes of Ash Bank. There is no accounting for obliquity of taste."

"Rawleigh detests the Park," said Frederica, reddening.

"Then Vaux and I were mistaken."

"In what?—did you fancy he had a predilection for that gritty *bel respiro*?"

"We fancied we met him on our road hither, assisting Lord Launceston to escort a lady who was mounted on your favourite Arabian."

"Indeed?" faltered Lady Rawleigh;—"was she tall or short,—dark or fair?"

"Of a fine showy person; and as far as her

veil would permit us to decide, a beautiful creature. But doubtless we were mistaken in her companions."

"I fear not!" involuntarily ejaculated Lady Rawleigh; and Lord Calder, surprised to find her indignation so limited in its expression, cast a sidelong glance towards her, and perceived that those beautiful eyes were now listlessly fixed on the wide landscape and swimming with tears. He remained discreetly silent, to give time for the exercise and repression of the emotions he had excited;—and when he fancied the bitter drops must have been driven back again into her heart, recommenced his persecution.

"It seems to have been a very sudden fancy on the part of Sir Brooke Rawleigh to go into Parliament; or surely Lady Derenzy's interest might have managed it for him without driving him to the resource of so degraded a political sponsor as Mr. Lexley,—or a representation which has been made a cloak or impunity to so many spendthrift libertines at Martwich?—You should have advised him better."

"My advice was not asked till the affair was settled."

"But surely on your marriage, some explanation was made of Rawleigh's public views?"

"I never heard of politics being introduced into a matrimonial contract; but I fancy at *that* period Sir Brooke entertained no intention of becoming part of the legislation."

"Indeed!" said Lord Calder,—and it was an *indeed* very much resembling that of Iago.

"Why should you appear so surprised?"—inquired Frederica, whose perception was now prodigiously quickened by any allusion to the actions or motives of her husband.—"Is there any thing wonderful in a sudden predilection for a political career,—is there any stated period for parliamentary tendencies?"

"I have a theory which says—YES!" answered his lordship with an insinuating smile; "and my surprise, arose in *this* instance from its singular corroboration of my peculiar whims and fancies. I always imagine that I can discover in my friends, in the second year of their

wedded life, a sudden mania for clubs and a decided partiality for Parliament."

"You mean that their home begins to grow distasteful to them?—But *we* have not yet achieved that fatal period; *we* are still in our *first year of probation.*"

"Then you must have begun your reign by a very injudicious mode of government;—you must have shown yourself too arbitrary—or—*too kind a wife!*"

Frederica started!—she fancied that the consciousness which now swelled her bosom and tingled in her cheeks, arose from self-conviction. "Lord Calder is right!" she thought; "*I have been too kind a wife;—I have disgusted him with my servility—my doting attachment. It is my folly which has driven him into the society of Mr. Lexley—into the snares of Miss Elbany. I have no right to be angry with him, —it is all my own fault; but thank Heaven I have time to amend my error.*"

Lord Calder no longer feared the *tears* of his companion; he saw that his last arrow had hit home, that she was piqued—as much against

herself as her absent husband; nor was he inclined to quarrel with the bright flush of repressed indignation which now tinged her cheeks, or with the gaiety which imparted a sort of unnatural wildness to her conversation. She had already resolved that Rawleigh should not hear of any listlessness occasioned by his absence from the fête—of mortification arising from his own engagements during her visit to Ash Bank. For the first time, the frank and ingenuous Frederica assumed the affectations of coquetry;—smiled artificially on Lord Calder, flirted with Sir Robert Morse, jested with Lord Putney, and hailed the incense burnt upon an altar wantonly abandoned by its high priest, with all the apparent intoxication of gratified vanity. Wonderful was the change operated in Lady Rawleigh's favour with the world in general, by this unusual vivacity! Indifferent observers are not nice in detecting the shades of distinction between nature and art; particularly where the assumed character is more pleasing to their selfish views than the original simplicity. Even Lord Calder was de-

lighted; for although he had the good taste to prefer his victim's ordinary tone of graceful and tranquil modesty, he regarded her at present as a puppet acting under his impulsion, and accrediting his infinite skill in social charlatanry.

At dinner, she found herself seated by Lady Olivia's desire at the head of the table of honour, with Lord Calder on one side and the young Duke of Draxfield on the other; Lady Rochester and Vaux, and the Rodenfels, being their near neighbours,—as well as Broughley, Mrs. William Erskyne, and Lord Putney.

"My dear Fred.! where have you been hiding yourself all the morning?" cried Louisa, soon after they were seated. "Lord Vardington—your new and devoted adorer—and myself, were in search of you in every "dingle and bosky bourne, from side to side." He was as usual charming;—but being engaged to dine in town with stupid old Lord and Lady Wroxworth, abandoned the pursuit, and went off with Princess Guéménée, just as with the help of an opera-glass we contrived to discover you at a

distance, building a nest on the skirts of the forest, in a holly-bush with Lord Calder."

"Is Lord Vardington gone!" exclaimed Frederica, without noticing her friend's ill-natured allusions. "I am sincerely sorry for it; I was not aware that Lady Olivia even expected him."

"Oh! fie—when he explicitly informed me that he was indebted for his introduction to Lady Rawleigh's and Lord Launceston's kind interposition."

"Your ladyship must not attempt to disavow your friends," said Lord Calder, excessively piqued by this explanation; "you see they are resolved not to allow your partiality to lose its influence with the world."

"Lord Vardington!" exclaimed Lady Rochester, to whom the newly-inheriting peer had been a something more than friend in his early days of fashionable cadetship. "Has *he* been here this morning? I have not seen him since his return to England. Is he much altered—how is he looking?"

"I fancy his lordship has been a resident abroad some twenty, or five-and-twenty years,"

said Broughley, with the accuracy of an historian. "Being a Roman Catholic, he found ready acceptance on the continent, even during the war."

"And as he was probably settled at Lyons or Rome before *I* was settled in my cradle," observed Mrs. Erskyne, "it is not to be expected that I should form an accurate estimate of the changes effected by time on his outward man."

"He is still remarkably handsome," said Lady Rawleigh, to deprecate the rising ire of Lady Rochester. "But his inward man can scarcely have been so refined and intelligent at five-and-twenty as at the present day."

"I never observed any extra-ordinary demonstration of ability on the part of my Lord Vardington," observed traveller Broughley, devouring his cutlet, *à la Française*, with the help of a knife, a napkin, and his own fingers. "I have repeatedly dined in his company in Italy."

"A circumstance which may enable you to judge of his capacity for swallowing *frittura*, or macaroni, but which does not alter *my* opinion of his conversational powers," said Mrs. Erskyne

angrily. “*Du reste*, Lady Rochester may possibly be enabled to judge for herself between the sapling and the oak ; for Lord Vardington has promised to steal away from the Wroxworths, and return here. It is only an hour and a half’s drive, with good horses,—and Lady Olivia promises to amuse us till after midnight; so that he may come in for two hours of my undivided attention; and as much of Frederica’s as Lord Calder can spare.”

“Dispose of Lady Rawleigh’s as lavishly as you please,” whispered Lord Putney ; “but do not defraud me of my due in your own. You belong to *me*, at least till dinner is over; and I might as well have you talking where I trust my friend Erskyne is listening—in the House of Commons,—as amusing all these people. Remember, I allow nothing beyond a whisper till the ice is on the table.”

“You are wrong,” said Louisa, with a degree of flightiness worthy his own levity. “Whenever you have any thing particularly particular to say, beware of lowering your voice. When you assumed your mysterious under-tone

just now, Mr. Vaux was stretching his ears, while he affected to busy himself with his chicken and its *papillote*; but now that I dare his inquisition by my every-day mode of speech, you see he has returned to his duty of pouring *huile à la rose* on the stormy billows of Lady Rochester's ill-humour."

Vaux, who had been listening to every syllable uttered by the pretty little asp opposite, gave her a look of most expressive bitterness on this explanation; but promising himself to seize some more propitious moment for her chastisement, he occupied the interval by promoting those sallies of witty animation, in which he perceived his friend Calder more than usually disposed to indulge. As soon as Broughley's learned and ponderous commentaries were buried under the oppression of a meal as comprehensive as his own travels, the brilliancy of the general conversation in Frederica's vicinity rose beyond the ordinary level; and Lady Olivia, when she occasionally directed her eyeglass towards her niece from a remote corner of the room, was charmed to perceive that the

coterie so unexpectedly attracted to Ash Bank by the charms of Lady Rawleigh, appeared as much enchanted as if frequenting one of its own habitual and exclusive haunts.

Frederica herself neither noticed nor applauded the efforts passing around her. From the moment Lord Calder's nefarious intelligence caused the vibration of that discordant string within her bosom, all the anguish she had experienced at the moment of Mrs. Derrenzy's indiscreet revelations was renewed in the depths of her heart; and the sting of the coiling snake became the more insupportable, that she felt herself compelled to endure its havoc with a smiling countenance. She seemed to listen,—she seemed to laugh,—and occasionally some comment or inquiry burst from her lips, which from its singularity or strange inapplication, elicited a general laugh.—Vaux and his party, so familiarized with the affectations of fine ladies, fancying she was ambitious of appearing *odd* and original, applauded her attempts as a perfect triumph; while Frederica,—beholding nothing in the convivial

multitude which filled the banqueting-room, but a mighty mass of importunate human life, accepted with unconscious bewilderment the champagne tendered to her glass; which she replaced on the table without knowing that she had quaffed its treacherous draught, —without feeling that she had even raised it to her lips!—

At length the feast was at an end; and the guests, unwearied by their tranquil pleasures of the morning, were glad to lounge in the twilight coolness of the lawn, or among the shrubberies, while fairy hands were preparing the banqueting-room for dancing. In less than an hour, it displayed a blaze of renewed illumination; light strains resounded from its domed roof, and light footsteps re-echoed their inspiration. Frederica, who had never danced since her marriage,—not from prudery but a disinclination for the amusement,—suffered herself to be persuaded by Sir Robert Morse who longed to tear her from Lord Calder's gouty side, that it was her business as mistress of the revels to open the ball; and much against her will,

she was now obliged to exhibit to the admiration of the whole room that graceful symmetry of form, and tranquillity of movement, by which Miss Rawdon had formerly distinguished herself in the giddy throng at Almack's.

But as soon as the dance was ended, she found Lady Olivia waiting to extricate her from the further assiduities of her partner. "My dear Fred.!" said she, drawing her into the vestibule, "do not waste another minute on the amusement of that foolish boy;—it matters nothing what verdict such a person as Sir Robert Morse may pass to-morrow in the park on the Ash Bank fête. I own, my dear, you have exerted yourself charmingly,—done your very best for me,—and I am infinitely obliged to you;—never saw you in such good looks, or such good spirits, Frederica;—but now you must come and help me with the Rodenfels and the diplomatic set. You know they are none of them dancing people, and Lady Rochester cannot do without her *écarté*; so I have ordered card-tables in Henry the Seventh's Chapel."

"But, my dear aunt, I cannot play,—I never

touched cards in my life except in a family game of cassino with mamma and yourself. I know nothing of *écarté*."

"I do not ask you to play; but just interest yourself in the formation of the parties, by drawing your friends to the table. You see, my love, if I give such men as Calder and Vaux, and Rodenfels, and Villette, nothing to amuse them between dinner and supper, their memories will be quite clear to detect all the *réchauffés* and stale jellies with which *Méringue* will economize his bill of fare."

"I will do my utmost to blunt their observation!" said Lady Rawleigh, smiling at the restless tactics of her aunt; and she found no difficulty in persuading Lady Rochester, Lady Blanche Thornton, and Lady Barbara Dynley, followed by their little subservient army of admirers, to crowd towards the apartment so incongruously selected for the attractions of the *écarté*-table.

Still the party wanted spirit;—the players were not habituated to each other or to the locale; there was no eager lady of the house, to

appoint, decide, divide, distribute,—prevent the ladies from cheating and the gentlemen from quarrelling. Lady Olivia was off to a consultation with Monsieur Méringue; and Lady Rawleigh was lingering indolently on a remote ottoman, listening or seeming to listen to the gentle flow of Lord Calder's soothing eloquence.

"My dear Lady Rawleigh," cried Lady Barbara approaching her, probably with a view to the interruption of a liaison interfering materially with her former influence at Calder House, "do pray come nearer to the table, and animate our proceedings a little. Let me put down a guinea in your name on our side, and you will bring us luck."

"Certainly,—if you will be the banker to my unprovided treasury, and will not ask me to play."

And in five minutes, Frederica was informed that she had won, and asked whether she would deposit the same sum.

"Put them *both* down," she replied to Mr. Vaux, who had ignorantly brought the two guineas to the sofa, from which Lord Calder

now rising, whispered a few words to his friend; but only to return with fresh eagerness to his seat, where he soon contrived to engross the entire interest of his companion from the murmur and occasional exclamations of the *écarté* table, by allusions—now indirect, now agonizingly personal—to Rawleigh's proceedings. It is a very malignant symptom when a man presumes to address a married woman with strictures on the conduct of her husband!

Occasionally this interesting topic was interrupted by Mr. Vaux's diplomatic messages of "Lady Rawleigh, you have won—Lady Rawleigh, you have lost;—Lady Rawleigh, will you double your stake?"—all of which fluctuations, had Frederica taken the trouble to give her attention to the subject, she would have supposed to be limited within the moderate boundary of a ten-pound note; and it was a stroke of horror and amazement to her, when she found her attention suddenly claimed by Lord Vardington, who had been standing for some time unobserved beside the card-table, and who, instead of accosting her with his ordinary grace of address,

observed abruptly:—" Good evening, Lady Rawleigh,—are you not rash in confiding the management of your finances to the general mercy?—Are you aware that you have already lost a hundred and eighty guineas?"

CHAPTER IX.

RESOURCE. But how can you lug them into a statute of bankruptcy? They are no dealers, you know.

PILLAGE. No dealers? Yes, but they are.

RESOURCE. Of what kind?

PILLAGE. Why they are dealers of cards.

FOOTE.

FREDERICA was scarcely less startled by this unexpected intelligence, and the mode in which it was communicated, than she had been by the fatal announcement put forth in all the pomp and circumstance of glorious circumlocution by Mrs. Martha Derenzy, touching the unsuspected frailties of her husband. Yet such was her inexperience in the details and hazards of the gaming-table, that the amount of her loss did not appear so frightful as to a greater adept in the vicissitudes of *écarté*. It seemed as if a

sum so quickly and easily lost might be as quickly and easily regained;—that Lord Vardington had only intercepted her fortunes of the evening at some unlucky crisis;—and firmly believing that the aspect of affairs must mend in the course of a few more deals, she repressed her anxiety, and replied with as much self-possession as she could assume, “I was indeed little aware of the extent of my stake—I must watch more narrowly over my speculations.” And rising from her seat she advanced towards the crowd at the card-table; followed by Lord Calder, who in spite of his secret inclination to massacre her officious Mentor, judged it prudent to affect unconcern in the business by entering into desultory conversation with Vardington.

Now Lady Rawleigh’s experience of cards and card-players was comprised in the sober drowsy game of long whist, peculiar to her mother’s moderate circle of dowagers; and the arcadian academy of tredillers, quadrillers, and cassinists, into which she had been inaugurated on occasion of one or two formal visits to So-

phronia of Twickenham. She had never seen the vexation of a loser extend beyond a peevish sigh, or asthmatic grunt;—she had never seen the triumph of a winner expand beyond the buckram simper of General Lorrison on dropping two half crowns into his spangled card-purse; or the tripsome sprightliness of Lady Lavinia Lisle's parting curtsy, after adding a new sovereign to her collection of coin of the realm. She was, in short, wholly and totally ignorant of the Satanic excitement of gaming in all its branches! What, therefore, was her amazement on reaching the cluster round the *écarté* table,—where a vista was immediately opened for her by the male idlers forming the background of the group,—to perceive the lovely Lady Barbara Dynley seated in all the suspense of “*Je propose,*” and her antagonist, Count Rodenfels, throwing a glance of scrutiny at once over his own indifferent hand, and her agonized countenance; while Lady Rochester,—with her artificial bloom heightened by a fever of agitation, such as would have driven

her to distraction could a mirror have been placed before her,—sat watching the result in speechless anxiety. Every female visage interested in the event, however young, however beautiful, was sharpened into a degree of ungracious asperity ; while on some of the ancient visages of the dowagers and sexagenarian spinsters, characters of cupidity and ferocity were engraven as if by the talons of some demoniacal agent !

The men who owned a stake in the golden piles and bank-notes heaped upon the table, more accustomed to subdue the evidence of evil passions and more alive to the *mauvais ton* of evincing any eagerness in the pursuit, affected to whisper to each other with a tone of gaiety almost hysterical ; while parched lips, bloodshot eyes, and a distempered spot upon the cheek, sufficed to betray their inward perturbation. There was not one among the party whose demeanour was natural, or whose voice was pitched in its ordinary key ; and no sooner was the game over, and the spoils

in process of division and subdivision, than Frederica found herself absolutely blushing at the disputatious and shabby vehemence of her own sex, and the angry looks darting from the eyes of the losing cavaliers. As she noticed the smile of gloating exultation with which Lady Barbara swept her allotted handful of sovereigns into her reticule, all the grace of action, and all the charm of countenance she had formerly admired in Mr. Dynley's wife seemed to subside from her imagination; and while the arrangements for the ensuing game were formed with the same contentious and ill-bred selfishness, Lady Rawleigh found a moment to express to the triumphant Lady Barbara her regret at being so largely indebted to her assistance.

"You owe me nothing!" cried the exhilarated winner. "As you and Lord Calder chose to be *ex-parte* abettors of our *écarté*-table, we have made you play in opposition,—so that you can settle your account with him at the end of the evening. Mr. Vaux has been booking for you both; and as *you* have won on the last

two games, I recommend you not to desert your luck. Play on, and you will bring yourself round in an hour."

Through ignorance or indifference, Lady Rawleigh accepted these counsels; and being soon wearied by the heated atmosphere round the table, and disgusted by the tone of avidity displayed by her female friends, she again retired beyond the limits of the circle, and seating herself in an open window became once more engrossed in conversation with Calder and Lord Vardington.

"I am happy to perceive," said the latter, in a low voice, as she threw herself into a vacant chair, "that although Lady Rawleigh pledges her *purse* to the *écarté*-table, she cannot fix her *interest* upon its chances."

"I am playing merely to oblige Lady Olivia," she replied, surprised by his unwonted gravity of tone; "and for the first, and probably the last time."

"You venture on a high stake for a beginner," said her new acquaintance in the same admonitory voice, which caused certain

half-uttered imprecations to interpose between the clenched teeth of Lord Calder.

"I suffer it to be fixed by others," replied Frederica drily; "and it is fortunate for me that they have not speculated more deeply on my behalf."

Lord Calder, apprehensive that the pertinacity of this intrusive counsellor might eventually discourage Frederica from venturing further into his toils, now judged it necessary to divert the channel of their conversation to some more auspicious theme; and such was his dexterity in the art of familiar eloquence, that he succeeded without much difficulty in arresting the attention of both, by engaging them in one of those gay and graceful arguments in which the nothingnesses of society may be enveloped by an original thinker and fearless talker. He advanced paradoxes to give them an opportunity of being refuted by the rational Vardington;—he professed subtleties of sentiment to delude Frederica into the absorbing task of investigation;—and by the time they had refined upon a few of these artificial theories, and con-

futed a few of his lordship's plausible casuistries, the crowd at the card-table broke into a degree of vociferation announcing that its mysteries and anxieties were over; while Mr. Vaux, approaching the window with his usual air of urbane egotism, observed to Lady Rawleigh that he feared the severity of fortune on the present occasion would afford her little temptation to become an *écarté*-player. "You have been in your usual luck, my dear Calder," he continued, "and Lady Rawleigh writes herself your debtor to the amount of two hundred and seventy pounds."

Notwithstanding the distemperature of heart and mind which had imparted to the whole evening a sort of visionary unreality, Frederica was startled into sobriety by this terrible sentence. She felt herself growing dizzy with the shock; and after a slight apology to Lord Calder for remitting the payment of her debt till her return to town, hurried away to seek confirmation of the intelligence from Lady Barbara, and to escape the scrutiny of Lord Vardington.

But scarcely had she attained the Gothic door of the misapplied sanctuary, when Lady Olivia seized her precipitately by the arm, and dragged her away to preside at a supper-table where the Rodenfels and a large party of the elect of fashion were already assembled; where the broadest bon-mots were in process of circulation with the champagne;—and where Lady Rochester's wit, exalted into its boldest key, was already eliciting the buoyant gaiety of her accustomed set. Among such persons, it may be readily supposed that the discomfiture of Lady Rawleigh was as much unnoticed as her real attractions were unfelt; yet scarcely had she been conducted to her seat by Sir Robert Morse, when she found herself assailed on every side by an excess of compliments and graciousness redoubling all former tokens of politeness. She was little aware of the true source of her increased popularity!—She was little aware that Lady Rochester, having discovered her to be capable of losing rouleau after rouleau without so much as inquiring the name of the dealer, or the nature of the opposition, began

to regard her with unequivocal respect; and would have forgiven her triumph had Titania delegated some attendant fay to steal a complexion for Lady Rawleigh from the bud of a damask rose!—Countess Rodenfels gave her a general invitation to her diplomatic soirées;—Lord Wallingford begged permission to leave his name in Bruton-street;—Lady Blanche exultingly reminded her that Sir Cappel Thornton's seat was not more than thirty miles distant from Rawleighford,—quite within visiting distance;—and the old Duchess of Ledbury inquired with a remarkable show of courtesy after poor dear Lady Launceston's pulmonary afflictions!

Yet not even these flattering testimonials to her recent accession of merit could withdraw the remembrance of Frederica from her own mischances. Having remained totally indifferent to their progress, and untouched by the hazards of the *écarté-table*, she could not of course feel convicted of the humiliating vice of play in its most flagrant sense; but when, on glancing wildly round the supper-room, she

perceived Lord Calder standing amid a group of fashionable roués, and recollected that *she was his debtor*—that she *owed* him a sum which she should find it difficult to collect at a moment's warning—her heart sank beneath the gaze of familiar admiration which she detected him in the act of fixing upon herself! A sort of incomprehensible murmur seemed deepening around her; her heart was sickened almost beyond the power of controlling her vexation of spirit; and it was fortunate indeed for poor Frederica, that the Ash Bank guests did not forget its twelve miles distance from London, and were at length disposed to take their departure. She saw the last loiterer depart;—she heard the boyish tumult of Lord Putney and the Duke of Draxfield sportively disputing the possession of the only cloak left in the vestibule; and without noticing the thanks now poured upon her by Lady Olivia for her successful exertions in favour of the fête, or listening to the recapitulation of Monsieur Méringue's blunders and deficiencies, she hastened to her own room,—hurried through the garrulous at-

tendance of Mrs. Pasley—and found refuge for her tears upon her solitary pillow!

Erring, however, as she was, Lady Rawleigh demands justice at our hands; and we feel bound to declare that, although her arithmetic was taxed in a perplexing mental calculation, and although Mr. Ruggs and his log-book were among the most horrific visions of her despair, the figures of Miss Elbany—Mameluke—and the member for Martwich—formed the latest images imprinted upon her mind as the morning sunshine glowed upon her first sleep.

Much has been said, and much indited, concerning the retributions inflicted by Providence on the réveil of the drunkard—concerning his headaches, and dizzy distemperature. But in truth there is no act of immoral excess which is not followed by a sensation of physical pain as its attendant shadow.

The dark and shuddering chill,
Which follows fast the deeds of ill,

is by no means confined to the bosoms of the intemperate; and is only especially attached to

the morrow's waking of the ultra-social, because inebriation is a vice incapable of concealment. Not Lord Launceston after the Squire Westernisms of a Warwickshire hunting dinner—not Sir Brooke after his fathomless bowl of Mart-wich punch,—was ever ex-cruciated by so oppressive a headache as poor Frederica, while she wandered among the rustic trellices of Ash Bank on the following morning. Her Thursday sufferings during Laura Mapleberry's attack upon Rawleighford, were as nothing by comparison; and could Lady Launceston have caught a glimpse of her pale and haggard countenance, she might for once have reasonably flattered herself with the prospect of nursing her daughter through a long and dangerous illness.

While Lady Olivia was busy with her head gardener in all the reversionary distresses of inspecting her trampled parterres, rifled exotics, and plundered conservatories,—and in receiving from her butler the cellar-book with its dozens of dozens of dozens extracted for the use of Monsieur Meringue and his myrmidons,—Lady

Rawleigh stole away unnoticed into those lonely shrubberies so recently invaded by folly, flirtation, and frippery, and now restored to their ordinary grassy tranquillity. The birds were singing around her; the wild flowers still sparkling with dew; and in an accession of rural sensibility, she pressed her hands upon her bosom, and inveighed against her own weakness in having quitted the rival solitudes of Rawleighford with all their pure and glorious charms, and unalloyed happiness of domestic life, to plunge into the toil and tumult of fashionable society, and encounter all the fretful irritations of the great world.

“I cared not for them—they cared not for *me!*” she exclaimed, as her restless footsteps wandered onwards. “I might have led a useful and happy life in Warwickshire;—and now it is too late! Were I to return home even this day, I should bear with me the shame of having been beguiled into unpardonable and sinful prodigality; and the sorrow of knowing that *his* heart has been profaned by devotion to another! It will not last—I know it will not and cannot

last;—unlawful attachments are ever of short duration!—But its momentary existence has destroyed all the charm, all the confidence of our union; and another and another will succeed to this first dereliction,—till I shall at length become indifferent to *his* indifference, and learn to despise or to detest my husband!”

And as she announced to herself this prospect of mutual indifference, poor Frederica threw herself down on a seat that very opportunely presented itself, and burst into an agony of tears. But floods of tears, whether originating in jealousy or remorse, cannot last for ever even when flowing from the eyes of the most heroic heroine; and when the concluding drops glistened on her silken lashes, she found her looks resting upon the self-same velvet pastures and shelving coppices which they had contemplated in company with Lord Calder on the preceding day; a circumstance which naturally brought to her recollection the ill-concealed idolatry of which she had been the object. Had she been happy,—at peace with herself,

her husband, and the world,—Frederica's heart was too deeply imbued with right feelings and virtuous principles, not to have detected and recoiled with disgust from the truth. But a thousand morbid emotions now affected her bosom.—She was miserable,—she was desperate, and she was injured!—and it is surprising with what blind predilection we turn in our sense of oppression and abandonment, to those who speak us fairest and enter most vehemently into our wrongs. To become fully conscious of the charm that lies in the soothing tones of affection and sympathy, it needs to have lost two hundred and seventy sovereigns at *écarté*; and to have been supplanted in the heart we believed exclusively our own by the person we most despise in the creation!

Frederica, while she pondered over the daring defiance of her wishes with which Sir Brooke absented himself from Lady Olivia's fête, could not but remember that Lord Calder had eagerly plunged into a society and a species of diversion necessarily odious to his fastidious taste, in order to approach her

side; that notwithstanding the artful attacks made on his notice by the beautiful Lady Blanche, and the flippant Mrs. Erskyne, he had never for a moment withdrawn himself from the task of cheering *her* depression, and animating the uneventful monotony of *her* morning. She recollected his almost paternal vigilance over her when she was molested by the bolder homage of Lord Putney, the Duke of Draxfield, or Sir Robert Morse; she recollected the feeling and gentle persuasiveness of voice and manner which had tempered his admonitions during their tête-à-tête on that very seat; and ended by quite forgiving him for having become her creditor, when she remembered that the act was involuntary on his part,—arranged without his concurrence by the Dynleys and the écarté players,—and claiming as small a share in his notice as her own. One point however was urgent; that she must accelerate her departure for town, in order to make immediate arrangements for the payment of her debt; and she resolved in defiance of her aching head and

heart, her empty purse and overcharged feelings, to escape at once the society of Sir Brooke and the necessity for a visit to Charles-street, by taking refuge at Almack's. She had heard Lady Margaret Fieldham canvassing for a chaperon in the ball-room the night before; and determined to offer her services so as to anticipate all remonstrances on the part of her husband.

Refreshed by these contemplations, Lady Rawleigh now returned to the house with a countenance very little more disturbed than that with which her fussy aunt emerged from her private audience with the French cook, and the English pantler. Lady Olivia had engaged to accompany her back to London in what is termed the "cool of the evening;" but as one ladyship was eager to escape the spectacle of the wreck of property consequent on the fête, and the other to fly to the spectacle of the wreck of property and happiness by which she was menaced, they became unanimous in an opinion that the "cool of the evening" is best represented by a sultry, dusty, breathless

afternoon in June, enjoyed on the high road among butter-carts and Epping stages. While Mrs. Pasley, ensconced in the rumble with Lady Olivia's confidential gentleman, made war against the Essex dust and sunshine, with a green veil and a bunch of fading lilacs in her hand, and against the capriciousness of her mistress by a murmuring series of accusations and complaints, Frederica was reclining in one corner of the carriage and her aunt in the other;—the one sorrowful,—the other sulky.

We are indebted to Dr. Johnson for a confirmation of our private opinion that one of the pleasantest of sensual pleasures is to be whirled along a level road in an easy vehicle. "Post-chaise" is the specification of the philosopher of Bolt-court; but the process of colloquial abuse having now restricted that once honourable appellation to the rattling and jarring vehicles distributed gratis by post-masters to unprovided travellers, we are unwilling to appropriate Frederica's equipage by the term. But designated by whatever name, it is certain that it had not progressed many miles over the

plane surface of the county of Essex, before the ill-humour and depression of its several fair inhabitants became considerably amended;—it was evident that Lady Olivia was already revolving in her mind the glorious verdict her breakfast was about to receive from society and the newspapers, as some sort of balance to its concomitant disasters.

“I cannot recollect any thing like a failure in the arrangements of the day,” said her ladyship, as these cheering anticipations dawned upon her mind. “All the fine and superfine people appeared quite satisfied, and stayed till the last; and the beauties had put on their best looks to do us honour. I never saw Lady Wandesford look so handsome,—she is one of the few matrons who can bear daylight; and Mrs. Offley gave us the *étrennes* of Herbault’s best Longchamps specimen. Lady Rochester, little Dynley, the Rodenfels, and Lady Blanche, were perfectly contented because they had all their old set about them;—Lady Lawford and Lady Huntingfield, because they had a new one;—and the young Duchess of Axeter

assured me it was the only time she has danced this season. That little silly friend of yours, Mrs. Erskyne, was of great use to me,—her flirting and folly make her very popular ;—and we never should have got up a mazurka but for her scolding the Duke of Draxfield and coaxing Lord Putney.”

“ It all went off very well ;—it was a charming breakfast !” said Frederica, with a desponding sigh.

“ Binnwell assures me that the Burgundy was sour, that out of the four dozen opened two were thrown away ;—and Meringue complained very much of the champagne, and said it poisoned his *plats* ; but somehow or other people got through both. Lord Calder said something very civil about the excellence of the pines ;—he never tastes them, you know, but is an unequalled judge of the bouquet,—and can distinguish whether a new Providence or a Catalonian is cut in the adjoining room.”

“ I heard Lord Vardington making a very scientific and laudatory speech on the subject.”

“ Lord who, my dear ?”

“ Lord Vardington,—the new man.”

“ I wonder which of my acquaintance took the liberty of bringing him ; for he certainly never was presented to me, and received no regular card.”

“ Oh ! people do those things now with very little compunction.”

“ Not wellbred people ;—particularly when there is a sitting down dinner or supper.”

“ The Duke of Draxfield brought his brother, Lord Albert ; and Lady Caroline Covey favoured us with two daughters and a niece more than were specified on her card of invitation.”

“ Dukes with a hundred thousand a-year are privileged to be impertinent ; and Lady Caroline is my second cousin. I dare say, by-the-bye, it was your new ally, Lady Rochester, who brought this uninvited man ;—I recollect there was some sort of scandal about them some five-and-twenty-years ago.”

“ Then it must have occurred when his lordship was at Eton ; for he cannot be more than forty now. But are you sure, my dear aunt, that any liaison ever existed between them ?—

for I once saw them together at Lawrence's gallery, and they did not seem to have any previous acquaintance."

"Confirmation strong!—a discarded lover must necessarily be as a stranger or as an enemy. But, my dear Frederica, I fancy that notwithstanding the praises you have bestowed on my fête and the exertions by which you contributed to its excellence, *you* at least have no reason to remember it with satisfaction."

"Nay!" replied Lady Rawleigh, blushing in the belief that the jealous motive of her depression was known to her aunt; "it would have happened on some other occasion, if not on this. Indeed on the whole I am thankful that my eyes have been opened."

"Pardon me, my dear,—I have a better opinion of your discretion!—I am satisfied the misfortune originated solely in my persuasions and in your desire to oblige me."

Frederica now perceived that Lady Olivia alluded to the écarté-table.

"And as I should be very sorry," continued her ladyship, with a grim smile, "that you had

reason to connect any unpleasant reminiscences with Ash Bank, you must do me the favour to accept this fifty pound note;—and you can devote the surplus to the setting of the Roman mosaics.”

The surplus!—Poor Lady Olivia!—In the simplicity of her frugal heart, she conceived it just possible that her niece might have been decoyed into playing five shilling points, and into a loss of some fifteen or twenty pounds; and fancied herself to be performing an act of signal munificence. It was in vain that Lady Rawleigh blushinglly declined the gift; the old lady’s heart and purse were both open on the occasion,—and she really rejoiced in being able to remove the uneasinss which she plainly perceived to be hanging on the spirits of her niece.

“And who informed you of my ill luck, my dear aunt?” inquired Frederica. “I did not notice you in the card-room.”

“No, my dear!—I^o was too busy with Mé-ringue’s people to come and see how you were going on; and with all my watchfulness I could

not manage to prevent them breaking off the head of Britannia in the biscuit group of my plateau, besides the arms of two shepherdesses."

"I conclude then, that Lady Barbara complained of sharing my misfortunes?"

"No! it was Mr. Waddlestone, who laughingly advised me to accelerate the announcement of supper, unless I wished Lady Rawleigh to be pillaged of her last guinea by Rodenfels and Co."

"Mr. Waddlestone?—how very officious! I was not aware that any of those odious people were present. I thought I heard something of Miss W. being confined with a bad cold."—

"Certainly,—and I fancy Launceston only remained in town on pretext of nursing the fair Leonora, for her father did not seem the least uneasy; and, to own the truth, I thought myself fortunate to get rid of the family at so cheap a rate. *He* came with the Prince de Guéménée."—

"Did he?" said Frederica, secretly reverting to the true motive of her brother's ungracious absence from Ash Bank,—“I did not even

perceive the Guéménées ;—in such a crowd one misses half one's friends."

"They went away éarly, to dine in town," said Lady Olivia, and added something further on the subject which was wholly lost to Lady Rawleigh ; for her thoughts were now rivetted on Lord Launceston's folly, and on her husband's treachery.—She had not even a name to qualify the guilt of Miss Elbany !

CHAPTER X.

Let the strict tale of graver mortals be
A long, exact, and serious comedy ;
In every scene some moral let it teach,
And, if it can, at once both please and preach.
Let mine an innocent gay farce appear.

POPE'S EPISTLES.

LADY RAWLEIGH had been careful to time her arrival in town so that the post hour would enable her to draw upon Mr. Ruggs, to the full amount of the two hundred and twenty pounds still remaining in his hands as the residue of her three-quarters' pin money; a sum which, with the note so kindly and opportunely presented to her by Lady Olivia, would discharge her debt of honour to Lord Calder. On examining her treasury, she found some forty or fifty pounds untouched of Lady Launceston's

original benefaction ; which she conceived would supply her incidental expenses till the 9th of August,—the anniversary of her wedding-day,—renewed her claims upon the Rawleighford agent, for the concluding hundred of the year ;—a sum appropriated to pay the statuary in Portland-road, and “put money in her purse.”

But then the opera-box,—the milliner’s account,—the Roman mosaics,—the Hampton expedition ?—Alas ! poor Frederica !—a sensation of loathing and terror pervaded her bosom as she pondered over these things ; and it afforded at least a respite to her agonies when she remembered having heard Christmas assigned as the season of universal acquittal of similar obligations. With a singular but pardonable abuse of arithmetic, her inexperience prompted a computation that the pin money of another half-year would set her free from all pecuniary embarrassment !—

Her spirits were however sufficiently fluttered by this opening of the budget, to lead her to rejoice in the information imparted by Martin, that Sir Brooke did not dine at home. Having

very little anticipated Frederica's return on the very day succeeding her festal fatigues, and being perfectly contented that she should remain at Ash Bank, out of the way of Lady Rochester and her set and under the duennaship of a gryphon of such unapproachable vigilance as Lady Olivia,—he was indulging in the Wednesday-delights of a senatorial half-holiday, at the sober mansion of a Derenzy cousin, gloomily domesticated in Argyll-street. This collateral branch of his kindred having inferred that his alliance with the fashionable Miss Rawdon must necessarily render him a very fine gentleman, and his seat in Parliament a very wise one, he found himself regarded with as much deference by the tribe of commonplace mediocrats by which he was now surrounded, as ever waited on the stately presence of Lord Calder, in the coteries of Calder House !

Meanwhile Frederica, after a few three-cornered billets of explanation with Lady Huntingfield and Lady Margaret Fieldham on her project of chaperonship, which was joyously accepted on the part of the latter, and

after a most elaborate plan de campagne, by which it was arranged that Lady Rawleigh's carriage should convey her protégée from Lady Salisbury's party to Bruton-street, about eleven of the clock, she threw herself down for an hour's repose previous to the business of the toilet. But after having been roused from her restless dreams by Mrs. Pasley's summons long before she felt sufficiently refreshed to encounter the labours of the evening, and just as in full array,—in all her brilliancy of garlands and diamonds,—she stood watching in the drawing-room to receive her bouquet fan and gloves at the moment of departure, a heavy unscientific knock invaded the street door—(*a coup de maitre* very different from the expected announcement of Lady Margaret and the carriage)—and the step of Sir Brooke Rawleigh was heard upon the stairs!

Frederica had time to assume a degree of dignified majesty becoming the occasion, and calculated to strike dismay into the soul of the delinquent; and so handsome did she look in this attitude of regal disdain, that nothing could be

more natural than the start and pause of delighted surprise which for a moment detained the astonished baronet on the threshold of the apartment.

“My dearest Frederica!” he exclaimed, advancing with affectionate warmth towards her; “I had not the slightest expectation of your return. What brought you to town in so great a hurry,—and where *are* you going in all that splendour?”

“You forget that it is Wednesday,” replied Lady Rawleigh, coldly withdrawing the hand she had been compelled to extend towards him in order to escape a more tender greeting; —“a circumstance which will as naturally account for my haste to leave Ash Bank; as for my dress.—I am going to Almack’s.”

“Almack’s!” cried the provoked husband, —who was very little accustomed to be welcomed in this harsh and contemptuous manner; and whose feelings were irritated by having imbibed a superabundance of fiery wine, in a feverish dining-room stuffed beyond its

dimensions by a set of ill-bred men, stuffed beyond *their* capacity with politics;—"Almack's!—can you not remain at home for one evening?"—and suddenly recollecting the invitations he had heard petitioned by Mrs. William Erskyne for Lord Calder and his sister, he naturally connected Lady Rawleigh's return and eagerness for fresh gaieties, with an appointment made to that effect at the Ash Bank breakfast; and threw himself sulkily on the sofa, while Frederica coolly replied that she found no inducement to pass the evening in Bruton-street in a solitary and deserted house.

"Could I have anticipated your haste to return to town," replied the baronet, growing still more angry, "I should not have accepted Mr. Derenzy's invitation. But since the house is no longer either solitary or deserted, perhaps you will oblige me by giving up this one ball in my favour;—unless indeed you have any *very* particular engagement to demand your presence there."

"I *have* a very particular engagement," said

Lady Rawleigh, adjusting her bouquet with the most provoking sang froid. And Sir Brooke, who had seen her on more than one occasion go through the trying ordeal of giving up a party when fully equipped in all the pride of beauty and finery, in order to gratify his whim for staying at home,—was as satisfied of the *particularity* of the present case as her utmost desire of vengeance could suggest. Between the irritations of sour claret and jealousy of Lord Calder, he was trembling on the very verge of domestic tyranny; and had just nerved himself to declare that he *insisted* on the resignation of the ball, when a thundering knock and a carriage stopping at the door, arrested the iniquitous sentence on his lips.

“Good night!” said Lady Rawleigh, instantly seizing her fan and gloves. “It is Lady Margaret Fieldham, whom I have promised to chaperone;” and without giving him time to extricate himself from his sullen recumbency on the sofa, in order to see her properly shawled and escorted, she bounded down

stairs, and in a moment he heard the departing wheels of the chariot.

“And such are the blessings of matrimony!” soliloquized the injured husband as he gazed round the lonely chamber, which for two days past had assumed a melancholy disarray in consequence of the absence of its lovely mistress; and which now derived a sort of mysterious gloom, from the single dressing-room taper, brought down by Frederica and left burning on a distant table. “These are the joys of a London life!” And rising from the sofa, he began to pace the room with a degree of perturbation almost rivalling that of the fatal Hampton morning, so connected with his imputed turpitude in the mind of his wife. But on this occasion it was too late to fly to Charles-street for counsel or solace; and he had begun to mutter a few unhandsome expressions touching Lady Launceston’s dowager hours, and valetudinarian habits, when it suddenly occurred to him to order a hackney-coach and proceed to the scene

of mischief; in order to investigate the plots of Lady Rawleigh, or at least repress them by his presence. He was so long in finding his ticket among the confused mass of invitations and visiting cards collected during Frederica's absence, that the plebeian vehicle to which he had condemned himself, arrived at the door before he had time by a glance at the looking-glass to ascertain that a disordered toilet,—and a heated, and family-dinnerish visage,—are by no means graceful preparatives for a ball-room so ostensibly illuminated as that of Willis; and Sir Brooke finally took his departure with a flaccid cravat, a dishevelled head, and a resentful heart, such as nothing but a cross husband ever yet dreamed of introducing into that temple of the graces.

Frederica, in the interim, delighted to have got over her first interview with the delinquent with a display of such dignified calmness, and with an avoidance of all allusion to Charles-street or Miss Elbany, such as must have necessitated the further crime of hypocrisy on his part, gradually recovered her

spirits in the forced duty of appearing courteous to Lady Huntingfield's daughter;—and by the time she had made the tour of the ball-room with Lady Margaret on her arm, and received her usual tribute of flattery and admiration, she contrived to forget Bruton-street and its tribulations. She found that for her own views and purposes, she could not be provided with a more satisfactory protégée than the one which had fallen to her share. There were no impatient lordlings eager to tear her companion from her side, as in the instance of Louisa Erskyne; no bevy of adorateurs to surround them with importunate homage.—Lady Margaret Fieldham had reached that critical point of dowager girlhood, which made it advisable to her parents to omit the date of her birth from their page in the peerage, and rendered current her partnership account little better than a certificate of bankruptcy. In the course of the season she thought herself fortunate in being occasionally led to the lists, by some detrimental or disreputable who found it convenient to *bag* her father's pheasants in October,

and *unbag* his foxes in December; or by some small dandy about town,—some poor honourable,—some noble secretary's secretary,—who managed to eke out his three hundred and sixty-five eleemosynary dinners, by frequent invitations to the well-spread board of Lord Huntingfield.

But as neither of her parents were on the spot to book a similar instance of polite gratitude for favours past or in prospect, poor Lady Margaret had very little chance on the present occasion of deserting her chaperon's side. She received languid bows, or listless smiles of recognition from half the men of fashion about town: but it was evident that those of the number who sought partners among the single of the female community, preferred them of some sixteen or eighteen years less experience in the world and its ways, than the Lady Margaret Fieldham. It was not a little amusing to Frederica to observe how laboriously the elderly young lady strove to impress upon her mind her own abhorrence of dancing in general, and of fatigue on this oppressive night in par-

ticular; and how completely she over-acted all her usual grimaces of affectation,—of susceptible nerves,—tender fragility of frame,—and tremulous delicacy. “It killed her to walk about,—it suffocated her to sit still;—in one room there was a most oppressive crowd,—in the other a paralyzing draught of air.” All which murmurs, being interpreted, simply meant that poor Lady Margaret was in agonies for want of a partner!

There was one branch of the business, however, which gratified even more than it diverted her. Lord Calder, who entertained a holy horror of affected women, and who had found himself at one period of his career a very ostensible mark for Lady Margaret Fieldham’s matrimonial manœuvres, no sooner noticed the companion with which Lady Rawleigh had fortified herself, than he went his way to the opposite side of the room; and devoted himself to a tête-à-tête with Lady Blanche Thornton *en attendant mieux*; that is,—*en attendant* that some raw guardsman should provide himself with the hand of Lord Hunting-

field's eager daughter. It is true he turned many a wistful glance of inquiry towards her, whenever some fashionable flirt anchored his cane for a minute beside the beautiful Frederica; and even seriously bethought him of imploring his *double*, Mr. Vaux, to take off for the charitable space of a single quadrille, that galvanized mummy who stood mincing and simpering beside her. But Lord Calder kept an accurate thermometer of the selfishness of his friends; and was cautious not to demand a sacrifice beyond the reach of their magnanimity. At length, however, unable longer to refuse himself a share in those gentle smiles which he saw dispensed by Lady Rawleigh in return for the deference and eager courtesies lavished on her by the leading men of the beau-monde, he contrived to reach one of his nephews;—a stripling reluctantly devoted to the public service of sketching monkeys on the blotting-paper of a treasury minute-book,—and very obsequiously devoted to the will and opinions of his very exclusive and very boroughiferous uncle.

"My dear Alfred," whispered Lord Calder with an air of confidential mystery, "I am surprised to see you idling about while Lady Margaret Fieldham has no partner. Surely I must have already pointed out to you the eligibility of being on good terms with that family?—Her elder brother, Lord Manningtree, has been much talked of lately for the Exchequer, and is one of the most prominent men of the present party."

"I really did not observe,—I positively was not aware,—I trust you will excuse my inattention;" faltered the captured Mr. Rockingham, who had been loitering in the vicinity of Mrs. William Erskyne,—with a hope of being eventually permitted to relieve Lord Putney's guard, on accepted as a pis-aller to escort that very capricious little personage into the tea-room. And while his crafty uncle leisurely followed his line of march to profit by the *ruse de guerre*, poor Alfred made his doleful way through groups of the youngest and loveliest women in England, to offer his homage to a superannuated damsel who had dawned upon a county ball or two, before his own Honourable birth was announced

in the Morning Post. He was just within sight and sound of Lady Margaret's pathetic vocables, when his co-mate and brother in official dignity, Lord George Madrigal, seized him by the arm; and while Lord Calder secretly wished that this small mimow of Helicon were gliding through its favourite shallows of the Pierian spring, the lyrist was heard to enter into a project of sublunary diversion, which seemed to allure the wishes of Mr. Rockingham far more than the antiquated charms of Lord Manningtree's sister.

"My dear fellow, I have been looking for you in ewewy quarter of the weom. I followed Lady Blantheth boe twithe wound the waltzerth, fanthying you mutht be cawying it; and I am jutht come fwom theartching Mrs. Erthkyne'th pocketh. Where are you going in thuth a huwy?"—

"To a better *place* I trust!—but what have you to say to me of such moment?"

"I want you to be of a water-pawty to Wichmond the day after to-mowow. An ecthel-lent thet—the Dynleyth, Erthkynth, Actheterth,

Putney, Dwacthfield, Wythe, Launthton, and half a dothen otherth; the guardth band, Gunter,—and a wuwal spot in the Park thelected by mythelf. Think what an aggwegation of attwactionth!”

“And at what rate of ruin?—a younger brother’s quarterly allowance?”

“Oh! no—a twifle—a twifle—two or thwee thoveweignth at the ecthtwemity.”

“I will think of it, and let you know in the morning,” said the perplexed Alfred; suspecting that his uncle might be within hearing, and prepared to lecture him on a projected indulgence so much at war with his official duties. But Lord Calder’s ears were far otherwise engrossed. From his station behind these two contemned and importunate boys, he could just discern the mild radiance of Frederica’s eyes as they rested on the countenance of some invisible personage, and the silvery tones of her voice breathing words of the kindest gentleness to the same-concealed rival; and had it not pleased Lord George to take flight at that critical moment towards the seat of the blue and beautiful

Lady Wandesford, whom he honoured with a sort of literary flirtation—a Laura Matilda and Della Crusca species of platonic attachment—his patience would have been utterly exhausted. But he had now the satisfaction of seeing his nephew's perfumed curls inclined towards Lady Margaret Fieldham, and of observing an acceleration of airs and attitudes on her part, such as spoke compliance with the request. Judging it time, therefore, to put forward his own claims, he advanced towards Lady Rawleigh just as her protégée faltered forth, "I had positively determined not to dance this evening; but merely as a relief to my chaperon from the severity of her duties,—I think, Mr. Rockingham, I may venture—on *half* a waltz."

Poor Alfred!—it had been his intention to demand a quadrille from so uninviting a partner; but Lady Margaret had now quitted Frederica's arm, and fastened herself to his own with the tenacity of a limpet; leaving to Lord Calder ample space and verge enough to assure himself that the individual favoured by Lady Rawleigh's smiles and Lady Rawleigh's gra-

cious discourse, was nothing more alarming to his self-love than the fair girl whom he had seen at the drawing-room in all the odium of consanguinity with the Cantelupe melon.

"Will you allow me to offer you my arm," said he, advancing towards them, "while Lady Margaret leaves you?" and he suited the action to the word, with very little doubt that his company would be gladly accepted.

"Thank you," said Frederica, with a smile of most hypocritical courtesy, dreading a *fête-dîte* under their present disagreeable reciprocation of debtor and creditor, "but I promised the Duke of Draxfield to dance with him, should Lady Margaret change her mind. Miss Waddlestone is engaged to waltz with the Comte de Molleville, and will inform the Duke that I am now ready to fulfil my engagement."

Lord Calder's heart swelled rebelliously at the idea of Lady Rawleigh's condescending to remind a young puppy such as Draxfield of his engagements, and still more at the recollection of the bootless pains he had taken to secure the happiness of another; particularly when the

count on whose arm Leonora was leaning hastened towards his grace,—who was at Frederica's side in a moment, hatless, caneless, breathless, and smiling his triumphant self-gratulation at this unexpected summons.

"At least," said Lord Calder, anxious in spite of his pique to retain some pledge for her return on the conclusion of the dance, "at least permit me the honour of holding your scarf and fan, while you are more agreeably engaged." And in another minute he had the satisfaction of seeing Lady Rawleigh's graceful figure whirling round the room as if in mockery of his defeated machinations!

It is allowed by all men endowed with that nervous susceptibility of body and soul which the ill-natured appropriate with the name of jealousy, that nothing can be more trying to a husband afflicted with this distemperature than to see the idol of his bosom dance, for the first time after her marriage, with another man. It usually occurs that the lady's latest exhibition of a similar kind, was made in conjunction with the fortunate suitor who has now the supreme

glory of calling her his own;—and being connected in his mind with that anti-nuptial coo~~st~~ship which forms the concluding stanza of the poetry of human life, the innovation appears an encroachment on his peculiar privileges. But what must be such a trial of sensibility when the dance is a waltz,—the loving lord an Othello such as Sir Brooke Rawleigh,—and the lucky partner a young gentleman of such unmatchable attractions as the Duke of Draxfield?—

Yet such was the malice of the fates, that precisely this combination of untoward events awaited the honourable member for Martwich when, having diligently searched every occult corner of the ball-room as the probable refuge of her ladyship and Lord Calder, he suddenly caught a glimpse of her lovely form flying through the maze of waltzers on Draxfield's arm, in the centre of a ring of admiring spectators!—When Collinet swelled his concluding minim,—when Musard's chin rested on his violin and his key-note,—and Frederica found her steps suddenly arrested in the circle by the

firm support of her partner,—she had the satisfaction of finding herself standing next to her husband,—his countenance lowering with all the tornadoes and hurricanes of conjugal indignation!

CHAPTER XI.

Am I the lord of such a lady?

TAMING OF THE SHREW.

THE start with which Frederica recognised this very unexpected proximity, was interpreted by Sir Brooke into the impulse of a guilty conscience; and naturally anticipating some show of penitence or humility in her demeanour towards an injured husband, he was not a little surprised to find his wife negligently decline the arm he sternly tendered to her support, and coolly announce that "she must go in search of Lord Calder, who was taking care of her scarf!"

What secret opinion poor Rawleigh might

form at that moment concerning the audacity of fashionable sin and sinners, it would be perplexing to define;—but the countenance with which, at some little distance, he followed the Duke of Draxfield and his partner towards the other end of the room, was sufficiently rueful to attract the friendly notice of Mr. Dynley.

“Ha! Rawleigh, my dear fellow!” he exclaimed, laying a detaining hand upon his arm. “I am delighted to see that you have been as much gratified as myself by the spectacle of Lady Rawleigh’s inimitable waltzing. I thought it perfect last night at Ash Bank,—but positively her accomplishments rise, like Garrick’s acting, to the level of the audience. By the way, you did not patronize Lady Olivia’s syllabub-and-green-goose festivities? I was afraid you were growing too fashionable to be seen with your wife; and that I, and Thornton, and Wandersford, should be left for the remainder of the season to the prominent odium of conjugal politeness.”

“I had business in town; and had no idea the thing would last till so late an hour.”

“Nor would it,—for we had all ordered our carriages at seven o’clock,—but Lady Raleigh put so much life and spirit into the affair, that there was no getting away. Assisted by Morse, she waltzed the whole ball-room into sensibility and animation; and aided by Lord Calder, doubled the stake at the *écarté*-table. Lady Barbara was quite amused by the novice-like zeal of her friend’s speculations.”

“I trust they may never mend in experience; I would as soon be married to a hyena as to a gambling wife.”

“Thank you for the inference!—But I find we all grow reconciled to the vices of our *chère moitié*. Bab’s passion for *écarté* appears to me an advantageous exchange for the levity of many of her female friends; and just look at Thornton yonder!—who seems quite as much pleased that Lady Blanche should leave him to his political reveries, and sit whispering under the orchestra with the Prince de Guéménée. You see we are all three satisfied;—you with a waltzing,—he with a flirting,—I with a card-playing wife!”

Sir Brooke certainly did not exhibit on his countenance much evidence of the satisfaction announced by his companion; but he judged it unnecessary to favour a fashionable echo, such as Dynley, with a profession of faith respecting his conjugal theories and practices. Gladly would he have escaped all further ordeal on the subject by pursuing the recreant Frederica to the arms of Lord Calder; but Dynley was not to be shaken off; and now summoned to his aid a tall scraggy-looking man standing near them, whose restless twinkling gray eyes seemed to wander on a voyage of discovery towards all points of the room at once. Elevated above the crowd, like the Eddystone light-house, he uplifted his gaunt ungainly figure in defiance of the contending tide.

"Indice! my worthy friend," cried Dynley, "you who, like Andes, look from your throne of clouds o'er half the world, prithee reassure poor Rawleigh respecting his lady's safety. He is struggling to make his way towards her, in the dread that she may

be shipwrecked against some fat dowager for want of his pilotage;—so ‘prate of her whereabouts’ like a good Christian as you are; and procure me the pleasure of his company five minutes longer.”

Sir Brooke bowed stiffly to the grim apparition before him,—with whom, as a reputed jackal to the clubs, and court-circular to the dowagers, he made it a point of conscience to maintain a refrigerating distance; but Indice had at all times too much to say to be repulsed by the coldness of an auditor, and now, fixed his glass inquiringly to his eye, with an officious determination to supply all and more than all the intelligence required.

“Lady Rawleigh, Dynley!—did you say? Lady Rawleigh—let me see—let me see!—I noticed her just now in the tea-room with Sir Robert Morse.—No! by the way,—*that was* an hour ago;—she left us on Lord Calder’s arm to go in search of the Duke of Draxfield; and I observed her afterwards talking to a very pretty girl, whom Putney informed me was daughter to that tallow-chandler introduced last

night by her ladyship to the écarté table at Ash Bank."

"But cannot you find her out for us *now*?" persisted Dynley. "Steer by Lord Calder, and I dare say Lady Rawleigh will not be far off."

"You deserve to be an elder brother of the Trinity House, or a director of the nautical almanack," sneered Mr. Indice. "Calder and her ladyship are retreating arm-in-arm from one of the prolix narratives of Lady Caroline Covey. The dismay depicted in their faces I can well understand,—having been twice attacked myself this evening by that most inveterate of Partlets;—once with the history of Sir Nigel's rheumatism, who is lying in bed after a dose of Dover's powders;—and once with a piece of steward's-room scandal about Wandesford and—"

"Well—well—never mind Lady Caroline's *jobotage*;—she takes care we shall none of us escape. But tell me, Indice, who do you mean by the tallow-chandler at Ash Bank?—I was in the écarté room all the evening; and

I saw no person introduced to the table by Lady Rawleigh. On the contrary she was sitting all the time in a window-seat with Calder, playing blind stakes."

"I mean a good-looking fellow with dark hair, who is always about with the Guéménées and Axeters. He has a very pretty little snow-drop of a daughter,—a prodigious heiress, who they say is engaged to Launceston."

"You mean Mr. Waddlestone!" said Sir Brooke calmly, not the least awed by the difficulty of pronouncing so plebeian a name. "A man of very enlightened mind, I understand, and polished manners; who is much courted in the best society, although I have not at present the honour of his acquaintance. I wonder, Dynley, that *you* did not recognise him at the Ash Bank,—for I think you told me you had been in the habit of dining at his table, in Italy, three times a-week?"

"Did I?—I make it a rule to forget where I dine; unless the chef or the cellar demand the distinction of a red cross in my private pocket-book."

"Besides," added Mr. Indice, significantly, "now that Dynley is so fortunate as to write himself a married man, heiress-hunting has become a very superfluous exercise. It is quite as convenient to him now to eat his cutlets at Calder House, as at any tallow-chandler's in the land. Vaux declares you have a catalogue raisonné of the houses belonging to real Amphytrions,—that he could swear to the merits of any man's *menu* by your manner of returning his bow;—and that you dropped Lord Wroxworth's acquaintance the very season he dropped his French cook."

"What else was there to recommend his dall, dry, rational coterie!" exclaimed Dynley, without attempting to deny the charge. "One could swallow even Lady Wroxworth's sententiousness in company with Vatel's filets; but by Jove, when I attempted them with boiled cod and a saddle of mutton, I found my digestion unequal to the trial."

Just at this juncture of the dialogue, Lady Margaret Fieldham,—who by dint of some of those arts peculiarly known to superannuated

beauties, had been contriving to fasten herself upon young Rockingham for the space of a waltz and a quadrille by leading him up and down the room in pretended quest of her chaperon,—much after the bewildering fashion of Hermina and Helena in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*,—unfortunately came in such immediate contact with her partner's husband, that there was no further excuse for trespassing on the patience of the unhappy Alfred.

"Sir Brooke!" she exclaimed, with a very picturesque pause of amazement, "do I absolutely behold you here, in the lively possession of your faculties, three hours after Lady Rawleigh's assurance that you were in bed and fast asleep?"

"Asleep—but not in bed," muttered Dynley; while Rawleigh, who at all times detested Lady Margaret's grimaces, and had not yet lost the awkward consciousness of her unlucky *entrée* in Charles-street, made as brief a reply as possible, in the hope that she would pass on and pursue elsewhere her flirtation with the unhappy boy she had inveigled into partnership. But

this was impossible. For full twenty minutes past she had been so eloquent in the expression of her anxiety to find her chaperon, that there no longer remained the least excuse for persecuting Mr. Rockingham.

"Can you tell me," she cried, again addressing Sir Brooke, "in what mysterious corner Lady Rawleigh has hidden herself?—We have had a long and hopeless chase after her; and no one can give us any tidings of her retreat. But I need not detain you any longer in the pursuit," she continued, dropping the arm of her partner, which was already stiffened by her obstinate adhesion, "for I have no doubt Sir Brooke will be kind enough to take care of me, till we discover the lost treasure."

The irritated baronet having reluctantly accepted the charge thus imposed; and being extremely unwilling to prolong the responsibility of so valuable a guardianship, immediately attempted to make his way towards the spot previously pointed out by the malicious interference of Dynley and Indice; but on reaching the spot, the guilty parties had again disappeared;

—no traces of Lady Rawleigh were to be discovered !

“ I told you so ! ” lisped Lady Margaret, enchanted at the prospect of a new tour of the room, which might perhaps attract another partner. “ I am persuaded Lady Rawleigh is in possession of Fortunatus’s invisible girdle ; for this is just the manner she has contrived to evade me the whole evening. However, under *your* auspices I shall persevere.”

Sir Brooke, who with all his perspicuity had not yet discovered how fluently fine ladies can fib when occasion, or even when no occasion requires, firmly believed that his wife had thrown off Lady Margaret’s company on entering the room ; and had most inhumanely withdrawn her protection ever since ; while Lady Margaret, finding the opportunity inviting for the indulgence of a few interjections and superlatives, amused herself as she dragged along on his arm by expressing that she was most horribly tired, —positively expiring with fatigue. “ Perhaps you will exert your influence in my favour,” she murmured—fully persuaded that they should

not encounter her chaperon for the next half-hour, "and persuade Lady Rawleigh to allow you to inquire for the carriage?"

"Certainly—certainly."

"There is nothing I abhor so much upon earth as wearing a ball threadbare!—But really Lady Rawleigh is growing *such* a rake, that I scarcely know how we shall persuade her to tear herself away."

"Frederica seldom stays any where after two o'clock," replied her companion, in the relenting veracity of his honest heart.

"Oh! my dear Sir Brooke! pray pardon me!—I positively saw her at Lady Blanche Thornton's after four."

"Then it was to oblige some troublesome young lady or other whom she had undertaken to chaperon;—for Lady Launceston's infirm state of health would never permit her daughter to contract the habit of late hours?"

"Very true!—but Miss Rawdon and Lady Rawleigh, you know, are two very different persons. The latter, being well aware of your wish that she should amuse herself in her own way, of course

indulges all her natural predilections and charming vivacity. I assure you she was the admiration of the whole room last night at Ash Bank; and I heard the Prince de Guéménée observe to Lady Blanche, how much animation Lady Rochester's set had infused into her character."

"Frederica possesses neither more nor less than the instinctive liveliness of *youth*!" observed Sir Brooke, willing to repay in kind the sarcasms of his amiable companion.

"I expect she will turn all our heads in Warwickshire!" continued Lady Margaret, reclining her own most lackadaisically on one shoulder. "I heard her inviting the Duke of Draxfield, and the Axeters and Wandesfords, to meet her at Leamington in the summer; and that singing man, Sir Vincent Randall,—and Mr. Vaux."

"Leamington!" involuntarily ejaculated Sir Brooke, to whom this disposal of the summer months was as new as it was repugnant.

"And I find you are to be steward of the races, and are to fill Rawleighford for the occa-

nice, and do the honours of the county in proper style. Ah! there is Lady Rawleigh at length;—yonder!—standing in the doorway with Sir Robert Morse.”

And pressing hastily towards her, they contrived to reach the spot just at the moment her ladyship, whose back was turned towards them, was in the act of receiving Lord Calder's parting bow. Finding Sir Robert Morse resolutely attach himself to her side so as to impede the possibility of confidential discourse, his lordship had wisely determined on retreat; and Sir Brooke had the satisfaction of overhearing his own beloved Frederica whisper to her friend at parting, “You will hear from me to-morrow!—unless you prefer calling in Bruton-street on the following day, when I will be prepared for your visit.”

“I think you cannot doubt that I joyfully accept the alternative,” replied Calder in a significant voice as he turned into the ante-room; and Frederica at the same moment perceiving her husband and Lady Margaret, exclaimed to the latter, “Ah! you are come at

last ;—perhaps if you have done dancing it may not be disagreeable to you to have the carriage called ? *I am quite ready.*”

No further pretext offering itself for delay, Sir Brooke had very shortly afterwards the agreeable task of escorting one sullen and one silent lady down stairs. Lady Margaret was angry with her unsuccessful evening, and the prospect of having her ball-dress crushed by the unwelcome intrusion of a third person into the chariot ; and Lady Rawleigh was anticipating the embarrassing conjugal tête-à-tête which would follow their departure from Lord Huntingfield’s door. But both ladies were erroneous in their calculations ; Sir Brooke was in a temperament of mind and body to find the night air extremely refreshing ; and having formally handed them to the carriage, he declared his intention of walking home.

Whether the exercise, the atmosphere, or the solitary self-communing with which they were associated, produced on this occasion a soothing effect upon his irritated nerves,—or whether his very just suspicion that Lady Rawleigh had

retired to the sanctuary of her dressing-room previous to his arrival, determined him to postpone the explanation which now appeared inevitable, it would be difficult to determine. But it is certain that poor Rawleigh, like other politicians, found it expedient to adjourn the debate,—or perhaps the division ; and to defer till the full-leisure of the following morning his remonstrances, explanations, prohibitions, and menaces.

CHAPTER XII.

Yet if you were not so severe
To pass my doom before you hear,—
You'd find upon my just defence
How much you've wronged my innocence.

HUDIBRAS.

VAIN are the calculations of myopic man !
Not Seged, King of Ethopia, in the pre-arrangement of his day of happiness, was more deceived than the member for Martwich in reckoning upon his morning of conjugal counsel. Long before his heavy eyes threw off the influence of Mr. Derenzy's heated wines, and Mr. Willis's heated rooms, and opened on the cheering prospect of a domestic squabble, Lady Rawleigh had quitted the house !—No elope-

ment, however,—no separation,—no scandal,—but a family incident of the most ordinary occurrence had summoned her to Charles-street.

It is true that when Lady Launceston's note, requesting an early visit from her dear child was placed in her hands, Frederica's affectionate heart indulged in an apprehension that the occurrence originating such a demand on her mother's part was not only of an extraordinary but of an alarming nature; but after hurrying on her morning-dress, and hastening breakfastless and on foot to her old home, she had the satisfaction to find Lady Launceston up, well, and dressed;—and seated before her accustomed allowance of chocolate and French rolls.

“My dear love!” she cried, as Lady Rawleigh entered the dressing-room, “how kind of you to obey my summons so early! I had not a notion of seeing you for four hours to come; for I heard you were not in bed till three, and Camomile assures me that ten hours rest is not more than sufficient for a delicate female. A mechanic may do with seven;—a robust man

with eight ;—a person in the decline of life with nine ;—and a woman of nervous temperament with ten.”

“ Thank you, dearest mamma, but I assure you *my* temperament is not at all nervous ; or your mysterious note would have reduced me to hysterics. Tell me what *has* happened :—why are you anxious for an interview with me ?—I was apprehensive that you were seriously indisposed.”

“ No, my dear !—much as usual !—a little hurried perhaps yesterday ; for Camomile, after feeling my pulse, judged it necessary to see me in the evening ; and even hinted that I might not be the worse for a grain of cynogloss in my julep before I went to bed. But with the help of his agreeable conversation I managed to get on without it ; and I think I may say on the whole, that thank God I rested pretty well.”

“ Your looks certainly confirm your own account, but—”

“ When Wrightson was putting on my cap this morning, I fancied I had got a little headache, and that it might proceed from rheu-

matism; for if Camomile *has* a fault, it is the habit of throwing the door wide open on its hinges when he is leaving the room;—I never ring the bell till I hear him half way down stairs, for fear they should open the street-door before he has closed mine. I even called for my vinaigrette, and thought I might perhaps be laid up for the rest of the day;—*that* was just when I despatched my little note to *you*, my love. But since I have taken a few mouthfuls of chocolate—(it is the genuine *chocolat de santé* which Olivia brought over for me from Paris) I trust I have got rid of all unpleasant symptoms; and if it were not for my sad loss—”

“Loss?—what—who—”

“My dear Frederica, I begin to doubt whether you have breakfasted?—you look quite pale and fagged. Do, my love, let Wrightson bring another cup and saucer, and try a little of Olivia’s chocolate; it will do you good.”

“Pray set my mind at ease! I see poor Chloe

is in good health !—To what loss are you alluding ? ”

“ Lucy’s society, my dear. Miss Elbany has been obliged to leave town on a visit to her friends ; and I am sadly perplexed how to get on without her.”

“ I think I *will* have some of Lady Olivia’s chocolate,” said Lady Rawleigh, ringing the bell for Wrightson, and drawing a chair opposite to that of her mother. “ It has an exquisite flavour of vanille. Will you spare me a roll, mamma ;—I have not felt so famished this month past. Do you know it is quite delightful to come and breakfast here,—this dear room reminds me of so many pleasant days ;—I declare it quite puts me in spirits.”

“ So it does Launceston ! He often comes and breakfasts with Lucy and me ; and really he is so gay and entertaining, that he makes me quite another creature for the remainder of the morning.—Ah ! we shall both miss poor dear Lucy ! ”

“ And when did Miss Elbany leave you ? ”

"The very day you went down to Ash Bank."

"Indeed!" said Lady Rawleigh, reddening with a sudden mistrust of the motive and destination of her journey. "And what called her away so suddenly?"

"Family business—some near relative returned from abroad, I believe. Wrightson went down with her into Sussex in a post-chaise, and returned the following day."

"And how did my brother bear his disappointment about the riding party?"

"Very ill, as you may suppose; for he had set his heart upon getting Lucy on horseback. But it all turned out for the best; for Lady Denzy is come up from Twickenham, for a day or two, to meet her niece, Lady Sophia Lee who is just arrived from Paris—(Colonel Rhyse's cousin, my dear)—and she wrote a very civil note, saying, that as you were absent, Lady Sophia would take it as a very particular favour to have the use of your horse; (she is a great invalid, you know, and cannot exist with-

out air and exercise)—and so Sir Brooke and your brother, and his friend Rhyse, made it a point to escort her; and a very pleasant ride they had!”

“I rejoice to hear it!” said Frederica, with warm sincerity; delighted to be thus relieved from a painful share of her grievances. “I always liked lady Sophia when I was a girl, before she married that old General Lee. I believe the match was entirely one of Lady Derenzy’s making. She accepted the Cupid on crutches, to escape from the tediousness of that horrible coterie at Twickenham; and I suspect the inordinate fancy for equestrian exercise she has evinced ever since, arises from her eagerness to evade his society a few hours in the day.”

“An ungenerous suggestion, my dear child; I assure you Camomile is far from thinking well of her. Between ourselves, he has even hinted to me that her liver is affected.”

“That her liver-*complaint* is affected, I verily believe:—but she is a very pleasant creature,

and I am glad she is come back : she will render the Derenzy family a degree more supportable.”

“ Ah ! my dear child, do not let the society of your gay friends—of these Rochesters, and Dynleys, and Thorntons—create a distaste for that of your husband’s near relatives. They all behaved very handsomely and kindly on your marriage ; and when you know more of the world, Frederica, you will discover the value of being connected with persons who ‘ work no evil.’ The Derenzys may not be very fashionable, or very entertaining ; but they are your well-wishers, and are incapable of—”

“ Thank you—thank you !—dearest Mamma,” cried Lady Rawleigh, blushing with a conviction of the excellence of her mother’s counsels and of her own flippancy. “ Believe *me*, at least, incapable of neglecting *your* admonitions ;” and she kissed the pale delicate hand affectionately extended towards her with a glow of tenderness towards the superior gentleness of her mother’s character. If any one had at that moment whispered to her the possibility that

she might learn to indulge in follies such as could give pain to Lady Launceston, she would have repelled the charge with indignation.

“Do you know, my love,” resumed Lady Launceston, gratified by an *épanchement de cœur* on the part of her daughter such as she had not lately witnessed, “I am far from comfortable about Sir Brooke: he sat with me here yesterday morning for nearly two hours—finding me rather low after Lucy’s departure,—and seemed so absent, and looked so hollow about the eyes, that I am beginning to fear the late hours and confinement of his parliamentary duties do not agree with him. They never did with your poor dear father; which was the reason Lord Launceston troubled himself so little about them. But well do I recollect that after the heat and worry of Lord Melville’s trial, he was obliged to take the Cheltenham waters for six weeks; and had two, if not three, extra fits of the gout in the course of the year.”

“But Rawleigh is not yet arrived at the season of that patriarchal malady; and *I* have not yet observed that he is looking ill. All

men grow fidgetty and restless in London; they are incessantly pining after their plantations and their harvests, and receiving tiresome Jeremiads from their country bailiffs. I really think there should be an Act of Parliament to prevent landed proprietors from straying beyond the boundaries of their own avenues."

"And their wives!—who appear just as fond of Almack's and the Opera, as if they had not an acre on earth!" said Lady Launceston, smiling. "And by the way, my dear Fred., Olivia will have it that Rawleigh is uneasy on your account;—that he is not half satisfied about your excessive intimacy with Mrs. Erskyne."

"Louisa is my old friend and acquaintance; and you, my dear Mamma, were never displeased by our intimacy."

"In those days I was willing to attribute her giddiness to the inexperience of girlhood. I never like to judge harshly of very young people, because I am aware of the difficulty of penetrating their real character and disposition. Their apparent docility often arises from hypo-

crisy and the severity of those who are put in authority over them; while their seeming levity *as* frequently proceeds from the artless vivacity of a buoyant temperament. It is not till the ship is fairly launched, that the faults of its construction can be ascertained; it is not till the girl attains the freedom of the matron, that her true nature discovers itself."

"And what is there in that of Louisa to alarm Sir Brooke and Lady Olivia?"

"Nay! my dear child, you who live so much in her society are better qualified to judge than I can be, who mingle so little in the world, and who turn so deaf an ear to all matters of scandal. For my own part, I am apt to conceive her frivolous and selfish; but Rawleigh considers her a *coquette* and a flirt; and your brother declares that she is a little gaudy fly, with a very venomous sting."

"You are come in happy time to answer for your calumnies!" cried Frederica to Lord Launceston, who now entered the room with an air of listlessness very different from the anima-

tion of his usual morning salutation to Miss Elbany. "Pray what have you to say against my friend Louisa."

"More than you will like to hear!—In the first place that she is decidedly *not* your friend;—in the next place that I heartily wish you were not hers;" replied his Lordship, sauntering to his accustomed elbow-chair.

"Take a rule to show cause," said his sister, "or prepare to be thought a libellous maligner of female fame."

"Mrs. Erskyne will leave herself but little female fame by the end of the season, if she proceeds at her present rate. I met her walking *tête-à-tête* with Putney, in one of those whispering galleries among the gravel-pits in Kensington Gardens, a few mornings ago,—at an hour when nothing but mischief causes fine ladies to be stirring."

"And what were *you* doing among the whispering galleries at so critical a time?"

"Airing Chloe, of course, like a dutiful son."—

"*No dogs admitted*," said Frederica.

“ ‘Ordered, also, that the keepers do turn out all improper persons;’—and yet you see Mrs. Erskyne contrived to intrude? No rule without an exception, my dear sister.”—

“ There, Launceston—you have driven Mamma away with your scandalous chronicles;—you know how much she dislikes *les cancans*.”

“ She dislikes every thing a virtuous woman ought to dislike,” said Lord Launceston in a low voice, looking affectionately towards his mother who was leaving the room.

“ No—no! my love,”—said the kind old lady. “ William knows my habits:—he knows he has said nothing I disapprove. But I have Camomile’s orders to take six turns in the drawing-room or any other cool apartment, every morning immediately after my chocolate. It is the only exercise I am allowed in the course of the day; and if any thing interferes to prevent it, I am sure to grow flushed and feverish towards evening. Miss Elbany generally entertains your brother; for I prefer Wrightson’s arm to lean on, even to dear Lucy’s.”

“ I am glad she is gone,” observed Lord

Launceston, as the door was carefully closed after the invalid by the obsequious hand of the attendant Wrightson.

“ From the force of habit, I suppose ;—‘ dear Lucy’ cannot always be spared for an early walk in Kensington Gardens.”

“ Dear Frederica cannot always be spared to give audience to a brother’s remonstrances.”

“ What !—have you not finished your homily ?—Have you any further strictures to pronounce on poor Mrs. Erskyne’s proceedings ? ”

“ A great many on those of Lady Rawleigh !—I seldom find you alone ; and I do not wish to vex Sir Brooke by making him share in my disapprobation.”

“ Now ask yourself seriously, my dear William,—are you qualified to play the monitor ?—Does your own conduct entitle you to be severe with mine ? ”

“ A brother is always entitled to watch over his sister’s honour. Frederica, do not reply to me with one of Mrs. Erskyne’s flippant witticisms. On my soul I am serious. I will admit my own career through life to have been every

thing you please that is disgraceful and contemptible.—But your brother's follies form no excuse for yours; and it is rather your knowledge of the straits and humiliation to which he has been reduced by profligate extravagance, which should serve as a check and warning to your own."

Frederica somewhat relieved to find that Lord Launceston's exhortations tended merely towards financial matters, now breathed more freely. She forgot how much of personal indiscretion she had recently mingled with the disposal of her revenue.

"I do assure you, my dear sister," he resumed in a kinder tone, "there are very few privations and mortifications I would not have undergone, in preference to hearing your name,—my own dear Frederica's unblemished name,—associated with those of the dupes and sharpers of fashionable life."

Lady Rawleigh started as this consideration presented itself for the first time to her mind.

"If there is anything repugnant to the feelings of a man of honour, or of a woman of de-

licacy," persisted Lord Launceston, "it is a female gambler;—a cold-blooded, calculating, mercenary woman, who—"

"Nay!" interrupted Frederica, feeling that this was a very exaggerated interpretation of her own offence, "foolish as I have been, my conduct has not earned this severe sentence of reprobation. I can honestly assure you that 'calculating' and 'mercenary' are epithets most unjustly applied."

"Do you mean to deny that you have lost a large sum of money at *écarté* within these few days?"

"Certainly not!—To oblige Lady Olivia, I thoughtlessly contributed to the stakes at Ash Bank; and knowing nothing, and seeing nothing of the game, lost beyond—very far beyond my calculations. But of all the follies and vices of this world, play is the very last to offer any attraction in my eyes."

"So have I often thought and sworn myself, when first entering the career of many a vice and many a folly. No one becomes deliberately a victim to his own weakness:—

it is the presumption of vanity which blindfolds him to his ruin."

"But, believe me, I am not blindfolded on this occasion. My first unlucky essay has given me little encouragement to persevere on the fatal path."

"You have all the encouragement which flattery and bad example can afford. I know these people better than you do; and I avoid their society because I do know them. If my frailties of nature are to bring me into habits of familiarity with women of light character, I do not wish to find them among the associates of my sister or my future wife."

"This is ungenerous!" cried Lady Rawleigh. "The indiscretion which has misled me into losing a portion of my allowance at the card-table, does not authorize you in injuring the character of those with whom I associate,—my equals in rank and respectability."

"Character! — respectability!" reiterated Lord Launceston. "How long is it since either of those terms was applied to Lady Rochester, unless by your unsuspecting and

inexperienced self!—Frederica! if you knew— if I dare unfold to your pure ears—facts connected with the reprobate women whom you pride yourself on making your associates, your pure heart would shrink from the contact. By Heavens! I would rather see you the companion of the leprous and the plague-stricken, than of those Hecates of evil.”

“Hush! hush!” cried Lady Rawleigh, laying her hands on his lips; “this violence mars all the influence of your arguments. I have no predilection whatever for the pursuits and habits of Lady Rochester and her set, and very little partiality towards themselves. That they maintain a high eminence in fashionable society, I think you will not deny; and finding them not only disposed to court me into their circle, but the circle itself unusually animated and agreeable, I have naturally returned again and again to Calder House. Lady Derenzy—Rawleigh’s near relative and privy councillor—has incessantly advised me to cultivate the liaison as exclusively worthy of—”

“Lady Derenzy knows about as much of the

society of modern London, as the ghost of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, were it let loose upon the earth. She estimates Lady Rochester according to the date of her husband's peerage, and not according to the enormities of her moral conduct. But it was not alone to advise and to reprove, my dear Fred., that I entered into this vexatious discussion ; my object was to remind you of your claims on the friendship and assistance of your brother. I hear you have been robbed of a considerable sum by these people ; and for worlds I would not have you destroy your husband's confidence by demands of such a nature. I have no doubt," continued Lord Launceston, attempting to assume a gayer tone as he produced a pocket-book from his vest, "that you have the strange presumption to exaggerate my thriftlessness and poverty. But although on the point of selling my coronet to an heiress, I assure you, Fred., I am very far from bankruptcy ; and you will seriously oblige me by applying this money to—"

"My dear, dear brother !" cried Lady Rawleigh, throwing her arms round Launceston's

neck, while her eyes glistened with her tears, "I seem to have plunged myself into difficulties and disgrace, only to become fully acquainted with the affectionate kindness of my nearest relatives. Believe me, I have no present occasion to trespass on my husband's generosity. My pin money, with the addition of a little gift forced on my acceptance by my aunt Olivia, will more than defray this heinous debt; and I have only to regret that she should have invalidated my impressions of her liberality, by perplexing you with tidings of my involuntary imprudence."

"Lady Olivia!—on my honour and faith I have not had a syllable of communication with her since the breakfast. Lady Olivia!—why for the next week she will be incapable of uttering a sentence unconnected with the damage done to her lawns, and the havoc committed in her cellar!—No, my dear sister!—my intelligence proceeded from a very sincere admirer of yours;—a man not quite so high in your conceit as Calder and his brother libertines, although more freely admitted into your favourite gang than I should have pre-supposed possible;—I

mean my future father-in-law,—Mr. Waddlestone.”

“That impertinent man seems to make it his business to interfere in my concerns!” exclaimed Lady Rawleigh, with a pettish recollection of his advice to Lady Olivia. “But with respect to his acceptance in Lady Rochester’s set, I do not believe him to be on terms of even distant acquaintance with any one of the party. On the contrary, several of them interrogated me last night at Almack’s, concerning your Leonora, who was there with Madame de Guéménée; and retracted every word they had uttered in her praise, when they heard her name and connected it with my notorious adventure at the drawing-room.”

“There is not one of their tribe,—from Semiramis Rochester, down to that deadly-nightshade-bud, Mrs. Erskyne, who is worthy to touch the hem of her garment!” cried Lord Launceston, with spirited indignation. “Leonora is the

Youngest virgin daughter of the skies;

and so far as *I* may be permitted to influence her destiny, rely upon it she shall never become

corrupted by association with such fallen angels as the Rochester faction.—No ! Frederica, no ! —there are still, thank Heaven, women to be found in our own rank of life, who reconcile a cheerful indulgence in the pleasures of society with unsullied purity in their domestic character ; and without making a recluse of my wife, I am satisfied that I can preserve her from the contact of the vicious and the degraded,—the female flirt and the female gamester.”

“ And how do you intend to regulate her intimacy with your friend Miss Elbany ?—Ah ! Launceston — Launceston ! I fear there is something of the Tartuffe in your admonitions to me ;—I fear you stand accountant for as great a sin.”

Lord Launceston turned away from his sister, and began to examine some Chinese puzzles and other fiddle-faddle *passetems* belonging to the dressing-room *macédoine*, in order to conceal his embarrassment.

“ The more I see of Miss Waddlestone, who in spite of the odiousness of her parents I must admit to be one of the most delightful and

captivating girls I ever beheld,—the more I am inclined to blame your manifest levity of conduct towards her,”—persisted Lady Rawleigh.

“ I am sensible,” replied her brother, evidently entering with reluctance into the subject, “ that I appear to you to be playing a most unworthy part ; and unfortunately I am so hampered with promises and engagements, that I must not at present hope for exculpation. All I can do is to entreat you will suspend your judgment, and rely on your brother’s integrity for the result ; and to beg you will not enter into any discussion of the Elbany affair with Lady Sophia Lee, who is just arrived ; and who, for my evil destiny, is intimately connected with those insufferable Trevelyans,—my worst incumbrance after all !”

“ What on earth has my poor cousin Mary to do with the interposing interests of Leonora and that odious companion of mamma’s ?—

“ Nothing very ostensible, certainly. And yet, Frederica, were I at liberty to deal candidly and explicitly with you on the subject,—were

I to acknowledge the profound impression—the idolatry—the infatuation which Lucy Elbany has—”

“ I will not listen to such sacrilegious confessions. I hear my mother’s step on the stairs ; and if you persist in these humiliating sentiments, I will fairly place before her the mischiefs in which she has inconsiderately entangled her son.”

“ Only one word more on the subject and I have done. Can you give me some insight into the true motive of Lucy’s abrupt departure from town ; and have you any idea how soon she will return to Charles-street ?”

“ Mamma acquaints me that one of her vulgar relatives has arrived unexpectedly from abroad ;—probably some purser-uncle in the West India fleet,—or possibly some cousin returned from Swan River.”

“ If it were a brother returned from transportation,” cried Lord Launceston, “ it would make no difference in my veneration for *her* ; I feel that life is insupportable to me during her absence !”

“ Then you are acting in a most unjustifiable manner towards the Waddlestone family,” replied Frederica, with spirit ; but her mother, at that moment entering the room followed by Countess Ronthorst, who was in the habit of paying morning visits while the larks of Wormwood-scrubbs were still on their nests, there was no further possibility of remonstrance.— They were soon engaged in a discussion on the comparative merits of calcined magnesia, Henry’s magnesia, and that of Godfrey,—of Savory,—of Tebbs,—of Weldon,—which caused poor Lady Launceston’s eyes to sparkle with the eagerness of the controversy.

CHAPTER XIII.

A plain trotcosey suits my station better
Than these new fanglements. Lord me no lords!
I hate such pyes, 'quipped i' the gaudy spoil
Of Madam Juno's prying popinjay.

DEKKER.

At his mother's request Lord Launceston now proceeded to Bruton-street, to acquaint Sir Brooke with the cause of Frederica's absence, and to entreat his company to dinner; and poor Lady Rawleigh, whose heart had relented towards him from the moment of learning his innocence in the Mameluke business, and who was strongly disposed by her brother's rhetoric to forgive his prejudices against the Calder House society, now began to anticipate with eagerness a family reunion in Charles-

street, secure from the annoyance of Miss Elbany's presence, and precursive of a final restoration of conjugal confidence.

But there is a special providence in the appointment even of a family-dinner!—and Lord Launceston, who was not covetous of a second edition of Countess Ronthorst's pharmacopœia, soon afterwards put his head into the dressing-room to announce that he had found Rawleigh engaged with Mr. Lexley and Sir Mark Milman, in some sort of parliamentary imbroglio;—who, having promised to dine in Queen-Anne-street, to meet the Lees, the only possible compromise was to offer Frederica's excuses, and explanations to Lady Derenzy of her mother's peculiar claims on her society. Lord Launceston bounded down stairs before his sister had time to enter into any further inquiries; and thus poor Frederica was doomed to another day's alienation from home and from her husband, and the tedious importunity of a morning of commonplace visiting;—to a patient endurance of the exaggerated nothings of Lady Lavinia Lisle, —the obsequiousness of Camomile,—the garru-

lous domesticities of Lady Caroline Covey,—and the fussy officiousness of her aunt Olivia. Never had she felt so impatient of the monotony of her mother's humdrum coterie,—never so oppressed by its uneventful tedium. She envied even the moping linnet in the dingy drawing-room of Mrs. Martha Derenzy; and returned home at night so dispirited and overwearied in mind and body, that even Sir Brooke Rawleigh's knock on his return from the House failed to dispel her leaden slumbers.

But another knock was destined to assail the door in Bruton-street early the following morning which “murdered sleep.” On entering the drawing room, Lady Rawleigh had the mortification to discover that the contrarious Ruggs in remitting her a bank-bill for two hundred, and a bank-note for twenty pounds, under cover to

“Sir B. Rawleigh, Bart. M.P., &c. &c. &c.”—had thought proper to address a few words to his patron in the envelope, on some matter of Swedish turnips, or *ruta бага*,—which fairly placed at Sir Brooke's disposal the secret of her extensive demand 'on the agent; and although

the presence of Mr. Richard Derenzy, who was seated at the breakfast-table prosing away during the process of his cousin's bread and butter, rendered all comment on the subject impossible, it was evident from the manner in which Rawleigh placed these diaphanous paper securities beside her coffee-cup, that his surprise and mistrust were strongly excited by so vast a corroboration of her personal extravagance.

Mr. Richard,—good soul!—wholly unsuspecting of the motive of her ladyship's blushes of acknowledgment, and of the possibility of a disagreement subsisting between two young persons in the honey year of their matrimonial life;—now took it into his head as country cousins are apt to do, to wax jocose touching Lady Rawleigh's absence from the family dinners of the two preceding days; and Frederica and her ruffled moiety had the satisfaction of being informed, with a knowing smile, that they were “quite a fashionable couple;—lived apart as people of *ton* and the figures on a Dutch weather-glass ought to do;—and all the other cut-and-dried witticisms, which underbred people de-

light in wreaking upon members of the civilized community; and to which newly married, or jealous, or gouty persons, are subjected by especial patent.

"I assure you, Lady Rawleigh, you missed a very agreeable party yesterday," said Mr. Richard, with a little authoritative nod that marked his reliance on his own discrimination. "Lady Derenzy was in charming spirits,—full of anecdote. She gave us the whole history of the establishment of the blue-stockings;—and some original anecdotes of the court of the Princess Augusta of Wales, and the adventures of the Duchess of Kingston."

"I have often heard her eloquent on those topics," said Frederica, drily.

"But Sir Brooke will, I am sure, confirm my opinion that she excelled herself yesterday. My wife and daughters were observing, as we drove home, that after all no one equals the vivacity, and information, and *bon ton* of Lady Derenzy."

Lady Rawleigh might have observed with

equal justice that she had often heard *them* eloquent on that topic before.

“Then we had that charming person Mr. Broughley!—a perfect Encyclopedia,—a library of general knowledge,—a man who has seen every thing—”

“And who takes care his friends shall hear of every thing he has seen. In my opinion a more tiresome, importunate companion than Mr. Broughley does not exist. He always talks as if he were communicating a paper to some learned association, or giving an extempore predication at the Royal Society.”

“Mr. Broughley is a person,” replied Mr. Richard in the measured tone of what is called a sensible middle-aged man, “whose conversation, like an instructive book, may not be calculated for the atmosphere of a fashionable drawing-room. It is not to be expected,” he continued with a knowing smile, “that dandies and fine ladies should be interested in the phenomena of nature; or in knowing more of the productions of foreign countries than that ‘for

them the Tyrian murrey swimmeth,' the merinos of the Pyrenees cherisheth its daintiest wool, and the worm of Piedmont windeth its elaborate web."

Mr. Derenzy, who was delighted with himself for the learned eloquence of his reproof, rejoiced to perceive that the superficial wife of his kinswoman considered it unanswerable; for Frederica was now extremely busy in preparing a mess of pottage for Sir Brooke's favourite spaniel, a privileged intruder into the breakfast-room.—Its master, meanwhile, profited by his cousin's exhaustion of breath to enter into the conversation.

"I was glad to see General Lee looking so much the better for his residence abroad. *He*, I grant you, is a delightful companion; so gracious, so moderate, so kind-hearted, that his presence always tends to soften down the asperities of other people. We are afraid of appearing peremptory, or selfish, or opinionated, in company with so gentlemanly an old man."

“ You cannot, however extend the former part of your compliment to Lady Sophia ;—she, poor thing, is miserably altered. She never was a great favourite in my family previous to her marriage, and is grown far more disagreeable since. It is not satisfactory to hear so young a woman deliver decided opinions on all subjects, without regard to the insufficiency of her sex and period of life ; and a man of reflective habits becomes disgusted by such unwarrantable assumption.”

“ Oh ! I have now been long enough a married man,” said Sir Brooke, who was somewhat mollified towards Frederica by the zeal with which she was presiding over Rover’s repast, “ to adopt the theory of an equality of intellect between the sexes. Any existing discrepancy is doubtless the fruit of education ;—indeed, on the whole, I think there are *more* clever women in the world than able men ; only it is our interest not to let them find it out.”

“ Aha !” cried Mr. Richard with a facetious glance towards Frederica—“ I am beginning

to learn the secrets of Rawleighford; and to know where to attribute the want of subordination in this house.—Well!—well!”

“Lady Sophia does not, I hope, appear to have suffered in health?” said Lady Rawleigh, without noticing his humourous familiarities.

“She always is, or fancies herself an invalid;—one of the mental delusions peculiarly characterizing the superior understanding of the fair sex!”

“I intend walking to see her after breakfast, if Sir Brooke has leisure to accompany me as far as Kirkham’s hotel,” said Frederica, inquiringly; “and if not, perhaps, Mr. Derenzy, you will oblige me by becoming my escort?”

“Surely you have some engagement at home?”—sternly inquired the astonished husband,—who had by no means forgotten the mysterious rendezvous given at Almack’s to Lord Calder.

“No!” replied Lady Rawleigh, blushing deeply, and as he feared, guiltily. “None which require my presence. Shall you be able to accompany me?”

“Certainly—of course!” replied Sir Brooke, still more and more amazed by her inconsistency; while Frederica proceeded to her dressing-room to equip herself for the visit and to enclose in an envelope “with Lady Rawleigh’s compliments,” to Lord Calder, those luckless notes which it had cost Obadiah Ruggs so many pangs to emit from his strong box. Having despatched the packet to Calder House by the hands of her own footman, she returned to the gentlemen; and a deliberate saunter of half an hour along the shady side of the streets brought them to Kirkham’s hotel, and decided the important fact that “Lady Sophia Lee was at home.” Sir Brooke, therefore, who had already paid his ceremonious visit of welcome to the General, took leave of Frederica at the foot of the stairs, after an arrangement that the carriage should be sent for her at two o’clock.

At so early an hour, Lady Rawleigh had fully promised herself the pleasure of an interview with her friend Lady Sophia unrestrained by the presence of other morning visitors. But

the General was a man of old-fashioned habits, and old fashioned hours; and Frederica, on entering his apartments, found the hum of general conversation established in an extensive circle. Lady Sophia, who had been accustomed during her whole life to exist in a crowd, was however so little embarrassed by the extent of her levee, that she instantly made her way towards the door with an exclamation of delight, and folded her in her arms with a degree of warmth somewhat unusual in our coldly courteous climate. General Lee rose from his seat, with his usual air of courteous high-breeding, to receive as a matron and a kinswoman the beautiful woman he had left a timid unmeaning girl,—an inanimate fixture in Lady Launceston's hermetically sealed drawing-room; and Lady Rawleigh, after glancing round the circle, and observing that it included the Prince de Guéménée, Lord Vardington, Lord Wroxworth,—to whom she offered the necessary tokens of recognition,—and two or three olive-coloured foreigners who were emphasizing Italian with both

heart and hand, found herself eagerly withdrawn by Lady Sophia towards a distant extremity of the room, where their gossiping could receive no interruption from the discussions of the General's associates, nor offer any to their graver arguments.

"My dearest Frederica," cried Lady Sophia with earnest cordiality, "how very little did I dream, when I last saw you dropping sal-volatile in the dressing-room in Charles-street, that I should find you on my return to England installed a denizen of the Derenzy clan! My cousin Horatio Rhyse was desperately in love with you just then;—and heaven knows I heard enough from morning till night of Frederica Rawdon, and her virtues and accomplishments, to have made me hate any thing less gentle and unpretending than you appeared. But I always told him he was much too poor to trouble either you or himself with matrimonial visions; and had no notion, meanwhile, how vast an obligation my counsels were conferring on the united houses of Rawleigh and Derenzy."

"You owed them some compensation," replied Frederica, attempting to emulate the courtesy of her companion, "for having deserted their society for that of General Lee."

"Come—come!" cried Lady Sophia, "Do not give me reason to suppose *you* deteriorated by contact with that odious toadying tribe at Twickenham! You have no excuse for becoming a flatterer,—for I suspect you have neither 'swum in a gondola,' nor 'seen the Louvre.'"

"I trust it is not to the extent of your own travels I am indebted for your favourable interpretation?" said Lady Rawleigh, laughing.

"My dear coz.,—for such for the future you must allow me to consider you,—were you to pass twenty-four hours in my company, you would admit that neither a pilgrimage to Bagdad, nor a voyage to Mexico, would suffice to tame down my truth-telling propensities. My frankness, or brusquerie, or whatever the good or ill-natured may term my authenticity of word and action,—has ever been a considerable drawback on my happiness and popularity. But now

that I have wasted so many words on myself and my qualities, tell me in return a little about the change in your own destinies. I dined yesterday in company with Sir Brooke, who was good-natured enough to lend me your horse, and ride with me the day before; and you cannot imagine how delighted I was to find myself in possession of a companionable cousin, instead of the great awkward boy who used to come home to us from Rugby for the holidays, with two large red hands, which had outgrown the sleeves of his jacket by a quarter of a-yard."

"I hope you did not attribute the change solely to his tailor," said Frederica, rather affrontedly.

"No!—solely to yourself. *He*, you know, was Lord Derenzy's favourite nephew,—and I her ladyship's favourite niece,—so that mutual antipathy was inevitable; more especially as Master Rawleigh's virtues in brushing and scraping his shoes before he crossed the spotless marble hall were always pointed out to the

imitation of Lady Sophia Rhyse,—who was apt to introduce into the drawing-room half the gravel of the Twickenham flower-garden.”

Frederica, secretly reverting to her husband’s lingering predilection for dirty boots, could not help feeling that he now appeared inclined to repay himself for the privations of his boyhood.

“ Even at the period of my marriage, when he had just left Oxford, the poor fellow was shockingly aunt-and-uncle ridden. Tell me! how did you manage to extricate him from poor dear twaddling old Martha Derenzy’s leading-strings, and Lady Derenzy’s snafflebit?—”

“ I will not undertake to prove that he is even yet wholly emancipated.”

“ But he is in parliament, and grown a man of the world;—sends down his pretty wife alone to a fashionable breakfast,—lends her horses and chariots to other ladies during her absence,—and behaves in short quite like other people. Believe me, my dear Frederica, this is a marvellous point of civilization to have been attained by one of the pupils of the De-

renzy school! All those people are full fifty years in arrear of their century."

"Sir Brooke is guided in his general conduct by the best of monitors,—good plain sense, and an upright heart."

"A very proper, plausible, and conjugal sentence! It seems decreed by universal concession in England, that all *plain* things *must* be good; and that virtue, like beauty, needs not the foreign aid of ornament. For my part, I would have merit as handsome as the Apollo; on the same grounds which induce mankind to lavish all the treasures of the arts on the temples of the gods. But now having abused and praised your husband to our hearts' content, afford me some intelligence of a person who, when I last saw him, was neither plain *nor* good;—your brother—"

"Surely Launceston was one of your riding party the day before yesterday?" inquired Lady Rawleigh; "and surely you must know more than myself of his proceedings, from Colonel Rhyse who is his constant companion."

"The very reason I should mistrust his

compte rendu;—any accusation of his friend necessarily involves Horatio;—and one of the chief uses of an Horatio is to cog, and lie, and bluster in Prince Hamlet's favour! Yes!—I *did* ride in your brother's company; but what did I learn by such casual association, except that he had a blood horse, and a well-made hat?—I want to hear something of his loves and hates,—his friendships and attachments."

"William is too kind-hearted to hate any thing; with respect to his attachments, he is said to be engaged to a soap-boiler's daughter,—or to her attractions in the funds."

"Hush! hush!"—eagerly whispered Sophia, glancing towards the circle at the other end of the room. "With all my predilection for sincerity, I think you overstep the mark.' And without in the least comprehending the implication contained in this reproof, Lady Rawleigh was involuntarily reminded by Lady Sophia's air of mystery, of her brother's unaccountable anxiety that his friend Rhyse's cousin should not be made acquainted with the position of his love affairs. Frederica felt

vexed when she recollected how nearly she had been on the point of betraying his secret.

“ I am glad to see you have the grace to be ashamed of yourself,” resumed Lady Sophia, in the same unintelligible strain, “ and I sincerely wish that Lord Launceston may follow your example;—for verily he has more than equal reason. I am come back to England quite in the humour to throw down my gauntlet to him; and if he had not been so assiduous about your horse and my ride, he would have had to exhibit articles of the peace against me long before this.”

“ What can poor William have done to offend you?—I am sure *his* regular habits have never been held up as a warning or example to any one.”

“ Oh, no!—but *his* sins are quite as enormous as Sir Brooke Rawleigh’s virtues!—That little mincing parvenu Mrs. Woodington whom I met at Paris, and who, as the Lady Viscountess Twadell, is on the point of returning to astonish London with a trousseau worthy a Russian grand-duchess,—assured me he was exposing himself by a connexion with some

governess, whom he would probably end by marrying."

"I think not,—I hope not!" cried Lady Rawleigh. "But even were he tempted to so gross an act of folly and self-degradation, tell me, my dear Lady Sophia, what interest have you in William and his peccadilloes? I imagined that you were scarcely acquainted with him?"

"Nor am I!—But he happens to be the source of affliction to a person whom I dearly love;—who, but for him would be deservedly blest with all the happiness which prosperity and excellence can bestow."

"My dearest Lady Sophia,—you stimulate my utmost curiosity!—What *can* Launceston have done,—and *who* can you mean?"

"It is not so much the things he has done, as the things which he has left undone, that move my indignation. I lived four months at Rome in the same hotel with Lord Trevelyan; and I can assure you, without the least compromise of my vaunted sincerity, that I found in Lady Mary all the virtues of a genuine Englishwoman, all the accomplishments of her

adopted country, and all the beauty of an angel."

"Alas!" replied Lady Rawleigh, "your assurances only corroborate my previous impressions. Every thing I have heard of my cousin Mary from those who are worthy to estimate so gifted a person, inclines me to believe her the most charming of women."

"Yet with all her attractions and all the brilliancy of her worldly prospects, this infatuated girl will not be persuaded to overlook that absurd engagement which contracted her to your brother before either of them were out of their leading-strings! She has had half-a-dozen English coronets, and twice as many Italian and German principalities laid at her feet,—in many instances by men really deserving her regard; and Lord Trevelyan, who is growing very infirm, is wild to see her happily married and settled."

"It is really vexatious that she should cling to an engagement which is evidently distasteful to Launceston,—and which at best affords her such very moderate prospects."

"Vexatious?—Mary's pertinacity is a posi-

tive evidence of aberration of intellect. Can you believe that she is as romantically in love with your brother, as if he were the most devoted of Paladins?—She will not allow one disparaging syllable to be uttered concerning him in her presence;—preserves his picture in a nankin frock riding on a Newfoundland dog, as a precious relic of their early attachment;—learns by heart every passage in yours and your mother's letters in which his name is mentioned;—and is in short as ridiculous on every point that concerns him, as if she had not a grain of understanding.—Poor dear Mary!”—

“I no longer wonder that Launceston is out of your good graces;—I am half inclined to banish him from mine,” said Lady Rawleigh. “What can be done to bring either of them to their senses?—I greatly fear it is altogether a hopeless case with William. Do you think I may venture to write explicitly to Lady Mary or my uncle on the subject?”—

“Hush! do not elevate your voice,—Mr. Waddlestone will hear you:—I suspect he has already caught some sentences of our debate.”

“Mr. who?”

“Your friend, or your brother’s friend, the soapboiler,” whispered Lady Sophia. “I would not hurt his feelings for the world;—there are few persons for whom I retain a more sincere regard.”

“They are all gone,” replied Frederica, looking towards General Lee and his friends, “except the Prince de Guéménée and Lord Vardington.”

“My dear cousin you are as bewildered as poor Mary!—Of what are you dreaming?—I am acquainted with no Lord Vardington;—I thought the title was extinct.—That tall dark man engaged in conversation with the General, is Mr. Waddlestone of Waddlestone House!”

END OF VOL. II.

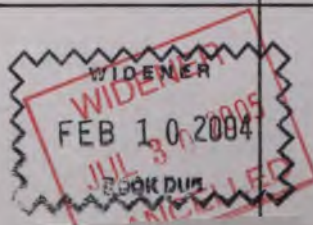


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